

THE PLOUGH

THE QUARTERLY
OF THE
BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

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GROWING UP IN COMMUNITY

A YEAR IN ASUNCIÓN

MARJORIE PARKER-GRAY

VOLUME IV NUMBER 4



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THE PLOUGH is the quarterly journal of the Bruderhof Communities in Europe 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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Manger and Cross

We learned the way to Bethlehem is narrow.
We followed on, until the Christmas star
Descended like a two-edged sword of fire
That pierced our conscience to its bones and marrow.
Stable was cross; yesterday was tomorrow:
Hung from the angled beams, the Son of Man
Received our gifts of pettiness and sin
And bore our burden of remorse and sorrow.

The dark stone of the past was rolled away:
We went in empty, knelt for speechless joy
At his gift; Christ was born in us that night.
In our heart's stable, we looked up to see
A baby's face triumphant with the light
Of Easter sunshine on Gethsemane.

JERE BRUNER

Christ's Teaching for the Political World today

It has been said that the differences among Christians about the lawfulness of participating in war do not spring so much from differences in their attitude towards war itself as from differences in their attitude towards the State and towards the existing social order. All Christians are agreed that war is a terrible evil, but there are many who think that it is justified in order to prevent what they believe to be a greater evil; thus the last war was seen to be justified as a means of preserving the freedom known as democracy. The question which faces the Christian is whether he values—for himself and for his fellow-men—the way of life as lived in his country above the way of life taught by Christ.

It is necessary to become quite clear about the relation of national government, based on force, to the kind of government which Christ represents, based on love. There came a time in the history of the church when the irreconcilable difference between the two forms of government became slurred over. Paul taught that temporal government was ordained by God for the punishment of evil. Governmental authority is necessary if there is to be order in the world, and God is a God of order. The teaching of the New Testament is that one should obey the government in everything that belongs to good order. It is only when the government abuses its authority, when it seeks to coerce a man against his conscience, that he is justified in rejecting its demands—he should obey God rather than man. Paul writes to Titus (3, 1): 'Remind them to be submissive to their rulers and authorities; they must be obedient; they must be ready for any good work'.

Especially in this twentieth century, when dictators have risen up to claim absolute authority, the contrast between the kingdom Christ brought into the world and temporal government has become most marked. It has been said that even in the time of Nero there was not such a deification of the person as with the modern dictators, Hitler and Stalin. Not so long ago we saw the same phenomenon in the Argentine when Eva Perón was raised to a position where the population was expected to idolize her. While this phenomenon is most clearly observable in countries where there are dictatorships, the same usurping of God's authority by demanding first allegiance takes place in countries like England and the United States, especially in war-time.

If we ask why it is that the great world churches are so unclear in their attitude to war, on the one hand deprecating war as a great evil and on the other hand justifying the necessity of supporting the State if it decides to wage war, the answer is clearly that the interests of the world churches are closely bound up with the interests of the State.

Perhaps the contrast between Christ's government and temporal kingdoms can be seen most clearly if we think of the followers of Christ as being ambassadors of his kingdom here on earth. The place of residence of a foreign embassy is not subject to the laws of the country in which it is situated, but represents the laws of the country of which it is the embassy. So it is with Christians on the earth. Christ came as the ambassador of God's kingdom, concerned first and foremost with the representation of God's will on this earth, and therefore his followers today must represent uncompromisingly the laws of his kingdom. And his teaching was, 'Love your enemies. Do good to them that hate you.'

The Price of Conscientious Objection

Perhaps I can refer briefly to the different positions which are normally taken up by Conscientious Objectors in countries where conscription is in operation and where it is possible to claim exemption on grounds of conscience.

1. There is the C.O. who is prepared to do non-combatant service, seeing no discrepancy between his Christian convictions and his participation in the army, provided he does not have to use weapons but is allowed to ease the suffering of wounded men. I have read statements by C.O.'s who have taken up this position, and it is obvious that they find it extremely difficult to reconcile their principles with the instructions they are expected to carry out and to stand to their pacifist position inside the military machine. One man who accepted non-combatant service wrote:

Every soldier (including the non-combatant soldier) is dedicated to protecting his country with force of arms. Each man is an integral part of the military machine, and contributes an important part in the success of the primary function of the army—the defeat of the enemy on the field of battle. Although the medical service has done wonders in saving lives under battle conditions, the Army Field Manual stresses the fact that the main function is not to save lives but to 'conserve the fighting strength'; and so, in the over-all picture of the army, the Christian witness is considerably weakened.

The prospective non-combatant should realize that the army is a complete dictatorship, and must be, if it is to fulfil its mission. It is completely different from civilian life and can be compared to the regimentation which one finds in prison. . . .

2. At the other extreme there are those men who feel they cannot have anything to do with the State on this matter and refuse to register under the acts. One such man has set down his convictions in the following words:

It seems to me that a Conscientious Objector, operating within the Selective Service Law (that is, the section of the law in the U.S.A.

which deals with C.O.'s) is still a part of the total picture of the preparation for war. It is expedient, even though done with reluctance, for the government to recognize a Conscientious Objector and then put him aside in civilian service, meanwhile continuing to conscript other men to learn to kill. I cannot be a part of a system that conscripts other men to kill, even if they do not object to it.

What usually happens to such a non-registrant is that he is sent to prison for one or more periods. Many of the C.O.'s who take this radical attitude believe that going to prison makes a positive witness to the way of peace.

3. Generally speaking, C.O.'s are prepared to do alternative civilian service where this is provided for under the acts. They see no contradiction between rejecting war and doing constructive service. In the latter, the governing principle is that a particular alternative service gives the possibility of a true peace witness. During the Second World War Quakers and Mennonites found themselves in the invidious position of taking on responsibility for organizing civilian workcamps under Selective Service and being restricted in the sense that they were expected to carry out regulations issued by government officials. Since that time, Quakers and Mennonites are prepared to deal with Selective Service only where they have an entirely free hand, and where they feel a peace testimony can be given. This question of freedom in choosing one's alternative service seems to me of primary importance. For the Christian it is not sufficient that he refuses to take part in the evil of war, but it should be his concern to give a definite peace witness.

While some countries make provision for voluntary peace work as an alternative to war service, the Christian pacifist has to be prepared to act according to his conscience even if no such provision is made. In many countries there is none, and the pacifist is called upon to suffer for his beliefs. In France, for instance, there are war resisters who are now entering upon their seventh year of imprisonment. During the two world wars many Conscientious Objectors suffered because of their uncompromising attitude. A modern equivalent of the treatment meted out to Maximilian in the year 295 was that received by four Hutterians in the First World War. They were descendants of the Anabaptists mentioned earlier. These four men were court-martialled and sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment. They were taken to a federal prison in California and when they refused to wear military uniform were stripped of all clothing except light underwear and placed in a dark, filthy dungeon where they had to sleep on a cold, wet, concrete floor without blankets. The next one and a half days they had to stand with their hands extended above their heads, crosswise, and were in this position manacled to the bars so high that they could barely reach the floor with their feet. For several days they received no food. After this they were

kept in solitary confinement for four months. Later, the handling they received while being transferred to another prison caused the death of two of them.

Since our Bruderhof community began in 1920 our members have all been out-and-out pacifists in their convictions. One of the reasons why I myself joined was that I felt I could identify myself with the radical attitude taken by members of the Bruderhof as non-participants in war. I felt I should thus be contributing to a way of life which would make war impossible. As a community we believe that a life of peace and brotherly relationships, where all members share with one another after the example of the early Christians, is the most radical and effective way of opposing war and the causes of war. It is our sincere hope that such a testimony for peace and brotherhood may be made in many countries, and that men and women will not only lay down the weapons of war but take up the tools of peace.

FALSE PERSPECTIVE

Nothing can distort the true picture of conditions and events in this world more than to regard one's own country as the centre of the universe, and to view all things solely in their relationship to this fixed point. It is inevitable that such a method of observation should create an entirely false perspective. Yet this is the only method admitted and used by the seventy or eighty national governments of our world, by our legislators and diplomats, by our press and radio. All the conclusions, principles and policies of the peoples are necessarily drawn from the warped picture of the world obtained by so primitive a method of observation. . . .

In this confusion and chaos in which civilized nations are struggling with utter helplessness, we are bound to arrive at the inevitable conclusion that the cause of this hopelessness and helplessness lies not in the outer world but in ourselves. Not in the problems we have to solve but in the hypotheses with which we approach their solutions.

EMERY REVES.

The Anatomy of Peace
Harper Bros., New York, 1945

AN ENCOUNTER WITH EBERHARD ARNOLD

In his new book DIE LETZTEN DREISSIG JAHRE (The Last Thirty Years) Professor Hans Joachim Schoeps writes about his contact with the bruderhof movement and Eberhard Arnold in the very early days, giving his recollections of this historic period in which the original German Youth Movement came into being. This Jewish author, born in 1909, is now Professor of History of Religion and Philosophy at Erlangen University.*

I slipped into the *Freideutsche Bewegung* (Free German Movement) as a straggler, for I did not belong to it at all according to age and so always remained an exceptional case. But the fact of my belonging to the *Freideutsche Werkbund* (Free German Work Association), the name given to the founder group of the German Youth Movement, brought me together with people who have been of great significance for my way through life. I think in the first place of Dr Eberhard Arnold, although we only met on a few occasions. I remember a very tall man of about forty-five in a corduroy suit, with clear shining brown eyes that looked down on one in a friendly but challenging way. His appearance was unusual in every respect. Once when he was in Berlin standing in front of the National Library in *Unter den Linden* the inquisitive townspeople made a circle round him and stared with eyes popping out of their heads.

Eberhard Arnold, son of a Breslau professor of theology, was secretary of the German Student Christian Movement in 1919, where, in the manner of Kierkegaard, he agitated for a radical Christianity for which one must be prepared to give one's life if necessary. One day—so he told us—he felt a call from the other world directed to him personally, a call which summoned him to follow in practice the early Christians. And so off he went and scattered his property to the four winds in order to become utterly poor. His wife and some friends joined him in his decision to lead a life of brotherly love completely without personal property. They took over a derelict holding in the old farming village of Sannerz in the high Rhön hills, and seldom has a Biblical saying been applied so realistically—in the sweat of their brow they ate the bread they wrested from the scanty earth. If their community economy ever achieved superfluity it was given away to those who were still poorer. If the harvest failed or something else unforeseen happened, then it was their friends who had to help them out. There has never been a community since the time of the Ebonites in East Jordan that has carried on such a voluntary irrational economy. Eberhard Arnold constantly emphasized that as true Christians they were more radical than social democracy or communism has ever been.

* Ernst Klett Verlag, Stuttgart, 1956.

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But the renunciation of private property, the rejection of the State and its order of compulsion, the struggle against war and against class strife and exploitation, was only the outer expression in the existence of these new brothers of the common life. The decisive thing, which I myself experienced, was the spirit of Christian love which rules upon the bruderhof; here the spirit of the 'holy ego' which dominates all human association was definitely broken. I do not hesitate to state that powers from another world were at work and Eberhard Arnold was their chosen medium. Had he lived a few centuries earlier as a Catholic he would certainly be included in the calendar of saints today.

Because of the very close, inescapable life together, community settlements of this kind usually break down through erotic tensions, petty jealousies, differences of character and interests. Not so Sannerz. This was Eberhard Arnold's work. Although at that time I was going through a very rationalistic period of my life and felt particularly remote from all mystical phenomena, I could not escape the powers of the spirit which were working at the bruderhof. They shone through Eberhard Arnold. When he spoke of the Holy Spirit or of the *Gemeinde* (Church-community) they were not merely theological conceptions but living occurrences in our midst. It was part of all this that powers opposed to the Holy Spirit, which he nailed down as proceeding from the world of demons, had to be broken. It happened to me personally once that when, following some dark instinct, I worked against the spirit of Sannerz and made a cynical remark, Eberhard Arnold proceeded to drive out the demon from within me. It would not have taken much more for him to have driven me, a sixteen-year-old lad, into a collapse. Another time a year later at a Free German district conference, he led me away from the idea of forming my own special group by unmasking my innermost impulses. The whole ideological system which was to be the foundation and justification of my separatist group had had its roots, so he explained, in my urge to power and self-assertion and was therefore in the last analysis inspired by the devil. In smashing this idea on which I had set my heart he enabled me to have one of the deepest experiences possible in this life—that of God's will standing in opposition to my wishes; and there is no more certain criterion for treading the right path than when I take up an attitude against my own wishes in order to follow the call of God.

Eberhard Arnold looked upon his activity as preparation for the coming kingdom of God. He was a radical Christian—as he believed, a Christian in the pure form, a Christian of the first and last hour. But he never disputed the fact that the Holy Spirit was also at work in other traditional forms of Christianity even if in an incomplete and limited way. This tolerance on his part made it possible for him to meet together with us other Free Germans who were anything but Christian in

origin. A good part of us in the Free German Work Association had quite definitely represented a human liberal attitude alongside and against Eberhard Arnold. And it went well together. The spirit of mutual esteem was great and generous, for everything narrow and sectarian was quite foreign to Arnold.

I remember an episode which was characteristic of the spirit of Sannerz. Whoever came to visit had first to work and set to in the fields or in the house, for there was always something to do. 'Whoever does not work shall not eat' was the watchword.

One day a tramp came to the bruderhof, a regular hobo who had spent a life on the roads—his name was Karl. The spirit of Sannerz gripped him so strongly that he decided to stay there for good and to undertake work free-willingly, something all his life long he had never thought of doing. Things went well, indeed beyond all expectation, until the spring came—then the *wanderlust* in the old vagabond grew so powerful that one day he was off and away. But after three months he was back again. The open road no longer attracted him. He was overcome by homesickness and was now ready to do any penance for his past guilt in having broken trust and having offended the spirit of the Church-community. He remained at Sannerz until his death. Such conversions, even of free-thinkers, happened repeatedly. It had nothing to do with what was called Christian mission (in the ordinary sense of evangelising. Ed.) The spirit in Sannerz was so strong that it needed no mission—indeed would never have tolerated it.

Eberhard Arnold is no longer alive. He died a few months before an S.S. squad broke into the bruderhof and set fire to the building to smoke out the 'Communists'. Under cover of night, a group of refugees—their few belongings loaded on to a horse-waggon—men, women, children crossed the Dutch frontier—just as one sees in woodcuts of medieval times. They eventually found a new home in southeast England and later in Paraguay, and in association with the 'Hutterites', the remnants of the radical Anabaptist group of the Reformation time, they built up new bruderhof communities. Only in 1954 did the first group return to live in their old homeland.

The Sannerz banner was red with a black cross, their song-book was called *Sonnenlieder*, to the evening song '*Kein schoener Land*' (No fairer land) was added this last verse:

Brothers, you know the bond that binds us,
Another sun shines brightly o'er us,
We live within its light,
Towards it we always strive
As God's united Church.

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The enduring significance which the meeting with Eberhard Arnold and the bruderhof had for my life is the insight it gave me into the association of guilt which the circulation of property leads to. Money is something evil, and perhaps true religion will always lead in the direction of the kind of solutions where one rejects possession of the goods of this world for the sake of a life of brotherly love. After all, God's workmen are to be recognized by their readiness, by the fact that they will simply leave everything if they hear in their conscience the call which commits them to service and to action.

Even more important is the fact that while I was still young Christianity was revealed to me through Eberhard Arnold as a spiritual reality which can transform and renew men. Only one other time have I met this experience in a Catholic form in the figure of Romano Guardini. I have not had such an experience among Jews. I have always felt Leo Beck to be just a noble humanist of Jewish origin and have honoured him as such, Martin Buber to be a mystic who has more in common with Eckhard than with Abraham, Moses, or Job. Frank Rosenzweig, who might have been the Jewish counterpart, I only knew through his writings and unfortunately posthumously.

Encounters such as I have discussed above take place on a high level and belong to the sphere of true religious faith.



HANS-IN-LUCK

Emmy Arnold was asked to tell at Wheathill about the early days of the community in Germany, and among other reminiscences was the following story:

I should like very much to tell something about Hans-in-Luck. He was dressed like Hans-in-Luck in the fairy tale and wore a sign on his back, 'Hans-in-Luck'. He loved to go around with lots of instruments strung over his shoulders, sometimes two fiddles (one of a fine Italian make which he got by trading), and several ocarinas which he called 'great-grandmother, grandmother, mother and child'.

When Hans-in-Luck came to see us not only our own children but also lots of children from the village came running after him into our house. He was a man with a great deal of humour but also a person with a belief in the future—one could see that in his songs. For example, the one 'Singing, we flock through the gateway of the new age' comes from him and he often sang it lustily as he strolled through the village with everyone following after. He always said, 'Don't say, "Once upon a time there was" but "One time there will be" '. He planted a tree on the Sannerz meadow which he called 'The Year-2000-Tree'. It was decorated with lots of bright ribbons like a maypole and we all danced round it, children and guests as well. The song I liked best was 'There'll come a time'.* He made this up once when we were all singing together, and we were almost moved to tears as we joined in. Well, that all happened at Sannerz.

Hans-in-Luck did not stay with us but wherever he went he did things which caused a sensation. In the Harz mountains he had charge of a little observation tower where he also had a shop with souvenirs for the visitors. (One sometimes found the year 2000 indicated on these!) Once when someone came into the shop it was empty and on the table was a placard,

Hans-in-Luck is having his fill,
Do the same—if you will!

He was very vexed that people came to his observation tower to drink and smoke as this was something he did not approve of, so one day he set fire to the tower and burned it down. Later on we received a card from 'A Wanderer's Attic'! Actually he was in prison, for he had to admit that he had set fire to the tower, but he also had to go to prison because he was one of the few conscientious objectors to war in those days.

He loved poor people especially. In 1924 there was the great inflation and many people were starving, and also at this time the army

*See the English translation of this song following the article.

had fallen very much into discredit. So one day Hans-in-Luck went to one of the army generals and made the following proposal: Take your army field kitchen to the city and feed the poor people there for this will be a good way to restore your prestige. I'll stand by and make a film of it all. And this really came off! Hans-in-Luck stood there with his camera and kept commanding the general, 'Stand up smartly!', 'Serve it out yourself!' and so on. And then, when everything had been served out, Hans-in-Luck opened his camera and, lo and behold, there was no film in it! But fortunately for him the people were all on his side and so he got away with it all right.

Our house at Sannerz looked rather shabby from having so many people live in it, and so, one day, the landlord came and demanded that we should repaint it. But of course we had no money to pay for such work. Now just at that time two guests were staying with us, Hans-in-Luck and another man, and they said they would do the work if we would buy the paint. And then something really did happen! Downstairs in the front hall they painted a big picture of the rising sun and of someone ringing a bell,

Ding-dong! ding-dong!
Springtime of the world shall come!

And there on the staircase wall was a picture of the whole household dancing and skipping after Eberhard who led them gaily onwards and upwards. Everyone found a picture of himself—even the geese had not been forgotten! On another wall were painted the notes of the song,

Let your hearts be ever joyous,
Filled with thanks, for this you know,
That the Father up in heaven
Loves his little children so,

with several children dancing round. We had no idea that he had meant to do anything like this. While he was at work some well-to-do visitors arrived and, looking at his picture, asked him, quite astonished, 'Where do you come from?' and the answer was, 'From the lunatic asylum'. It was no wonder they enquired anxiously afterwards, 'Whatever kind of a man have you got there?'

In 1939 or 1940, when we were living at the Cotswold Bruderhof in England, we read a book about the resistance to Hitler in which it was said that Hans Fiehler had been imprisoned by his brother, the mayor of Munich, and tortured for his belief in future peace. After the war I wrote at once to friends in Munich and we tried to trace him, but it seems that Hans-in-Luck had disappeared, having suffered the fate of many others who raised a protest at that time.

THERE'LL COME A TIME

DISMAL, drear dawned mankind's ice-age,
Death and winter all around,
Since the cold, mass-murder's ravage,
Bitter, frozen hearts abound:
Greedy wolfpacks, grim and savage,
Slinking o'er the frozen ground.

Yet within this vale of sorrow
As when snowdrops softly chime,
Tinkling tidings of tomorrow,
Fairylke—there'll come a time!
Tiny bells ring in the morrow,
O rejoice! There'll come a time!

When through every land and nation
Peace and joy shall have their sway,
Spring must come throughout creation;
Shepherds and your flocks, be gay!
Universal jubilation
On the world's midsummer day.

Soft spring breezes gently blowing,
Sweet as blossoms that unfold;
New humanity arising
As the prophets once foretold:
God once more shall walk among us
As in Paradise of old.

Multitudes will soon be singing
From the lofty halls and vast;
With strange sounds the air a-ringing
And the mighty organ blast;
Sounds that set the echoes ringing
When mankind repents at last.

Come, thou day when from the shadows
Shall arise a new mankind;
Morning of a thousand rainbows,
Men at one in heart and mind;
When the rushing, mighty wind blows,
Whitsuntide of all mankind.

HANS FIEHLER (Hans im Glück)

GROWING UP IN COMMUNITY

Although it is a part of the Wheathill Bruderhof, Cleeton Court lies a mile down a very steep hill from Bromdon and in the winter the road is often blocked after a heavy snowfall. In the spring of last year the Children's Home was moved from the 17th century farmhouse down there to a new house on 'the plateau', an open level field overlooking the farmhouse and dining hall at Lower Bromdon. Only a few yards away the new school is being built and some of the classrooms are already in use.

As the orphan children, who have been in the care of the Society of Brothers since 1949, took a more active part in the working life of the community, it was felt that their old home at Cleeton Court was too far from the centre. The new building is a bungalow, with central heating, water, and electricity and has been approved by the Home Office Inspector.

It was with some feelings of regret that the children left Cleeton Court. They had taken a keen interest in the farm there, where calves and lambs were raised. The advantages of being at Bromdon, however, were soon discovered. Schoolfriends were more easily accessible and on most evenings during the summer one could see a group of children playing together or taking turns to ride the school pony, Rusty.

Six of the children are German war orphans who came with four others seven years ago. They have since been joined by several English children, and together they live in the community as a family under the care of the house-parents, Owen and Alice Humphreys.

Klaus, Herbert, and Heiner have each passed that fateful fifteenth birthday which makes them 'youth' and no longer schoolboys. They take a man's part in the morning's work. Klaus as second cowman is up for early milking each morning and on the spot when a cow is calving or the vet comes. Heiner assists the stockman at Cleeton Court, Hasso—his own dog—at his beck and call to fetch and drive. Herbert after some weeks helping to plant out conifers (trees are his passion) is working with the poultry. For two hours each afternoon they all come faithfully to go on with their studies in English, German, mathematics, and science in our Continuation School. Now that they are 'youth' they join with zest in the activities of the larger youth group—an excursion, folk-dancing, singing, play-reading, or discussions. Soon they must train for their chosen careers as agricultural engineer, forester, and shepherd and stockman.

Dieter and Edeltraut make steady progress at school. Dieter's great outside interest is animals. He has reared a pig, and he is president of

the Pony Club which organizes the schoolchildren's riding—bareback, of course. Edeltraut enjoys sports and has taken part in a number of netball matches with neighbouring schools. Juergen now goes to a local secondary school, but in the evenings and at weekends he is to be seen careering over the fields on a pony, letting off some of his superabundant energy.

The three English children—nine-year-old Daphne, eleven-year-old Roger, and twelve-year-old Edwin—have been in the family for several years and attend the school at Cleeton Court. A recent addition has been little Billy, a toddler, who has been left in the Society's care.

We feel constantly grateful for what has been given to and through this small group of children in a work which seems so little in the face of the great need of children in the world over, but so much when one sees these young lives developing and unfolding. We adults are often humbled by their simple response to the life they see around them, and it is a joy to us that Heiner, Klaus, and Herbert take part in the inner meetings of the community, at their own request. We long that such work may be widened and strengthened and this especially for children who have lost the security of a settled home life.

The three new school buildings that stand above the centre of the community will link our education more closely with the daily life. Cleeton Court was too far away for the younger children, and some of the practical school work such as domestic science, carpentry, and dressmaking can be done more conveniently at Bromdon. Furthermore the old house was becoming too cramped for the best efficiency.

In the summer of last year an international workcamp erected three prefabricated buildings to provide four classrooms, a school hall, and staff rooms. This year the floors have been laid and the interior work carried out. Covered passageways have been constructed to provide access from one building to another.

As our children grow up we wish them to reach out and get to know first-hand the world around them by availing themselves of the training which can be offered outside the community. A number of our older schoolchildren are now attending local secondary schools, while among our youth some are training for agriculture, domestic science, dressmaking, engineering, nursing, children's work, and dairy and poultry work. The community life is not something to be indoctrinated into children—they must experience both worlds and come of their own free will and as a result of their own experience to the point of decision, whether to join the community or to follow another way. That so many of our young people do dedicate their lives to the cause of brotherhood through community, in spite of youth's natural tendency to rebellion, is

a source of great encouragement and further evidence that community is a way of life open to all ages.

Our young people are to the fore in taking to their contemporaries the call to a constructive life of service and peace. They take an active part in youth conferences and workcamps and have spoken at meetings in nearby towns. This is the message—the Christian message of hope in a world without peace—for which our whole Society lives and works. With this message our community reaches out to men and women across the barriers of race and class, and in this spirit it educates children to become builders of a better future.

A YEAR IN ASUNCIÓN

MARJORIE PARKER-GRAY

The afternoon sun was still pouring down heat as the river boat made its way through the chaos of Asunción harbour and we waved farewell to the folks who were on their way to spend Christmas at home in Primavera. It would take all night sailing under the brilliant stars to reach the little town of Rosario, and then another five hours lurching along the sandy, bumpy road to their final destination, our three villages of seven hundred people, only about ninety miles away by air. Our thoughts did not follow them long, for the few of us who were left could not help thinking of the many tasks to be done in these first days and weeks of our year of responsibility at Bruderhof House. The main group of young people would not be coming down until the new school-year began some weeks after Christmas, but the business activities of the house must carry on, for here at Asunción is the main point of contact between our three communities way back in Primavera and the rest of the world. This year we should be a group of thirty people—eight adults and the rest young people in training, and those of us who were responsible but new to the task of running the house must be ready when the whole group assembled.

During the Christmas season our shop is particularly busy. The shop dates back to the beginning in Asunción in 1942, when even one customer a day was hailed with acclamation; now there is a stream of purchasers and the orders for our wood turnery come from places as far apart as Panama, Canada, Uruguay, and Europe. The craftsmanship of our brothers in working with the hard Paraguayan woods produces articles of brown beauty, and we sell all we can make. Another branch of industry which is developing rapidly is that of selling bottled juice. Paraguay is a land of citrus fruit and our plantations of grapefruit and oranges are proving a source of income. The community artists are also

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represented in the shop. This Christmas we sold greeting cards designed by members, and a variety of oil paintings and woodcuts picturing the Paraguayan scenery and life which were arranged among the turnery. One of the most important activities of the shop, however, is the opportunity afforded to answer the many questions: 'What is the Society of Brothers?' 'Where do you live?' 'Why?'

Twice a day one brother struggles to make clear contact with Primavera by radio. In spite of its frustrations the wireless has proved vitally important in times of emergency, as for instance when a plane has had to be sent to bring in a seriously ill patient for an operation. Usually, however, the conversation is routine business and will send our buyer out into the streets to purchase repair parts for the lorry or cloth for the sewing-room or special food supplies. Another brother may set off to the harbour to meet an incoming ship with two Ferguson tractors for the farm work. (The problems of liberating them from the toils and snares of customs and arranging for their transport to Primavera is another story.)

One of the most exciting aspects of the work is the service as travel agency and hostel for those coming and going. There is, of course, much local travel, but, apart from this, our year saw major journeys to and from the United States, Uruguay, England, and Germany. The work of getting papers in order and passages booked by plane or boat, making visits to police or doctor, checking luggage, and so forth is a major activity. The special joy comes when the people themselves pass through our 'clearing-house' and usually stay for a few days. Although we were always happy to have them come it was not so easy to maintain the smooth running of normal business. For instance, a Primavera family of parents and eight children is expected on their way to the States. Where shall we sleep them all? Have we enough beds? If somebody mends the torn sheets will the other sheets get dry and make enough to go round? In next to no time a couple of our lads are off on a hired cart to collect sacks of shavings from a neighbouring carpenter and soon a group of helpers is sitting in the hall stuffing mattress sacks and sewing them up and, lo and behold, there are enough for all!

Early in the new year we became the proud owners of a house situated five minutes' walk from our old rented quarters, and with this acquisition the pressure for space was eased. It had a wonderful spacious courtyard for garden, and further building possibilities. Quite an unessential but nevertheless joyous attachment was an eighteen metre tower that gave one of the finest views of Asunción to be had from any point.

Without this new house I do not know how we should have managed to put up all the visitors who came during the year. The busiest time was when a group of Primavera young people descended on us for

the purpose of producing a set of plays—the serious *Der Deutsche Hiob* by Ernst Wiechert and humorous sketches by Hans Sachs. These twenty young people swelled our ranks to fifty during the time of their final rehearsals and the actual presentation. For several days they were away, producing the plays in Independencia, an outlying German-speaking colony, and then they were back again giving the plays to a city audience. It was all most exciting and stimulating.

Although Primavera has a small hospital and three of our group are doctors, there are difficult medical cases, both among us and among our neighbours, that require more specialized treatment or better facilities than we possess. Consequently our house is also a hostel or even an auxiliary hospital for such people. In one emergency a sister arrived at the airport on a stretcher and rapid arrangements had to be made to get her to the hospital. One of our group had to go along as translator. Later came the cry, 'Who can give a blood transfusion?' That call was heard more than once during the year and there was never a lack of people willing to answer it.

Yet another way in which we are increasingly able to help Primavera is as a centre for little holiday trips. Members needing a rest or celebrating a special anniversary may simply pass through on their way to and from the lovely lakeside of San Bernardino, a two-hour bus journey from the city. Others come to see the city itself, the first time for most of our children and the first time in many years for some of the adults. The shops, the streets, the trams, a train, a cinema, and indeed an ice-cream cone can be a thrilling experience. Our people always enjoy the local covered market, open from day-break to midday, where one can purchase every conceivable fresh fruit and vegetable, plus meat, fish, live chickens, and flowers. The market women know our resident boys through the daily purchasing and hail them vociferously and with endearments before bargaining adeptly. The narrow passages are packed with a jostling, cheerful crowd of purchasers, scarcely able to make headway. Out in the streets sitting on the ground, oblivious of the refuse of decayed vegetables or oranges, are the poorer vendors, accompanied by a child or suckling baby. Women walk by smoking fat cigars and expertly balancing huge baskets on their heads. Others ride donkeys, their meat baskets full to the brim and a sunshade or a kerchief over their heads.

Most of the resident young people in our house are in training. Through the years we have had an average of about ten boys and girls. They are getting professional and technical training—teaching, medicine, nursing, mechanics, carpentry, commerce, dressmaking, watch-repairing, agriculture, and so forth. Their programmes vary, both in the time they are away at school or workshop and in the time they have to

study at home. For many of them examinations seem to happen all too frequently, and puckered brows and, at times, feverish activity, indicate something serious afoot. Ominous forecasts prove mostly unfounded, however, and, when the results come in, tensions relax and the sun shines again.

Almost everyone takes some share in the work of the house,—getting breakfast, cleaning, helping a little with the laundry, cooking and mending, for we have no paid help. Although regular studies and housework take most of the time, the young people are able to fit in special courses such as learning violin, typing, or shorthand, or they give tuition in English or Spanish to earn a little money, or practise hobbies such as handicrafts, paintings, toy-making, weaving, caning chairs, or even making furniture for the house. A number of them tackled the garden and from a wilderness start there soon arose a profuse display of flowers in front of the house and some creditable vegetables at the back. The tomato plants yielded a bumper crop. Water for the plants, as well as water to drink and water for all the cleaning, was a serious daily concern, for it was a year of drought and this is one of the few capital cities of the world without a public water-system.

An outstanding event of the year was the reception into the Society of five of our youth. We can never take it for granted that our children will come to the conviction that man's true vocation is a brotherly life, and indeed their period of training is partly a time for them to find out whether they respond to this call. In the normal course of life in the house there are innumerable discussions about the meaning of life and the form it should take, but once this group of five had become convinced of the way and asked for full membership it was necessary to have more intensive discussions. In a city where military parades are compulsory for both school boys and girls we have to give much attention to our attitude as pacifists. As the young people are finding their own individuality they are keenly interested in questions of freedom, loyalty, and discipline, and a particularly lively talk came out of the question, 'Do you feel pressure to join the community?' The consummation of this search was the final joining of the Brotherhood circle, an inspiring experience for us all. It meant that we now had a really sizeable and genuine brotherhood group in Asunción.

One would like to tell of our visits to the Salvation Army children's home and theirs to us; of the tables we made for this home; of our contacts with a group of young Zionists; of the gay, vigorous evenings of folk-dancing or singing; of the evenings when a humorous sketch, spontaneous and with the simplest of costumes and properties, seemed to fit the occasion; of the night when two boys failed to return home and were discovered, after a worrying search, locked up in jail in a round-up

of young men of military age without their papers; or of many a Saturday morning when helpers were roped in to bake for a Sunday birthday celebration. But it would be a long story.

Something, however, must be said of guests who shared an evening with us. A particularly interesting group was the 'Friends of Philosophy', whose discussion evenings were regularly shared by one of our young people. Real issues of life concerned them, as can be seen from the choice of such topics as 'What are the obligations of one human being to another?' We were deeply moved by a couple who, refusing to conform to political domination in Paraguay, were exiled to the Argentine for several years and suffered much for their convictions. Another guest was a traveller and explorer who had penetrated the Amazon country and discovered a valuable drug used by the Indians. These and many others brought us stimulation and a contact with the far reaches of the world.

Although city life had its attraction, the chance to get out on excursions was highly prized. One day we set off for the hills of Paraguarí. Breakfast was scarcely over when an excited group of fifteen loaded themselves with a heterogeneous collection of suitcases, sacks, and rucksacks. The glamour and seriousness of a Mount Everest expedition was in their stride and on their faces, and the cumbersome baggage had somehow taken on the character of oxygen cylinders.

With the train ride behind us, our party scrambled or even crawled through scrubby bush, slipped over pebbly scree, and hoisted each other up over the bigger rocks until at last the breath-taking moment arrived—we were on the summit and gazing spell-bound over woodland and plains to the distant blue hills. A fire was soon made, for cooking and for comfort, and later the evening passed in the romance of wind-swept mountain and starry sky. The South American countryside was startled by the strains of 'Loch Lomond', 'The Raggle-Taggle Gypsies', and many another English or German song, ringing through the still night air. . . .

Many are the stories that could be told, but this is sufficient to show that a year in Bruderhof House means a lot to our 'Youth'. Here they are awakened to the problems of life—the injustice, sickness, poverty and wealth, the broken homes. They see the drunken beggar lying in the paper-littered gutter of our own street, the homeless orphan earning his livelihood as boot-black, the stream-lined cars flashing by, the magnificent edifice of a new bank rising like the shrine of a pagan deity. From our tower we can look out over the city and know that beneath that view lurks squalor and misery. And so, in our inner meetings, we let our thoughts and hearts ascend together to view that Holy City for which we long and work, and whose coming is our faith and assurance.

FORUM

On Grounds of Conscience

At the point of decision to join the bruderhof, a young man who came to the Wheathill community last year was recalled as an army reservist in connection with the Suez crisis. His letters show how he took a stand as a Conscientious Objector. One of our members describes the court martial at which he was present.

I've only been here twenty-four hours and we are ready for off. We do pretty well as we like and we are hanging about most of the day. All ranks are reservists including the officers and they haven't a clue. It was rough going the first day with the documentation and drawing out kit, but it's surprising how soon you slip into things again. When I start thinking about the thing I feel miserable. I did so especially on the first day. It all went against my conscience and I was getting ready to make a stand. I was going to lie on my bed and refuse to do anything. But then I thought the commonsense thing was to obey orders. I looked at it this way. If I had started being awkward I would probably never get out of detention for two years. But if I soldier on, this trouble may blow over soon and we might be out again in a few months. I know that morally I am in the wrong, but I am not strong enough to stand for what I know to be right. It's one thing to be a Christian in the community, but it's practically impossible in these surroundings.

The atmosphere here begins to get hold of you—you can't fight it, and then you lose the strength to stick out for what you believe. In fact you begin to lose any feelings about it.

. . . A Week Later

The decision is made. The fight is on. I am standing for the cause of peace, and with right on my side I have nothing to fear.

This morning I had to disobey orders and so I was immediately placed under close arrest and marched to the Guard Room. I was later marched before the Company Commander and charged with wilful defiance of commands given by a superior officer, as a result of which I am now locked up in a cell, and tomorrow I shall appear before the lieutenant-colonel commanding the battalion who will decide whether I shall be court-martialled—I think that a 'court' is inevitable.

This is not an easy thing for me to do. I have always been a good soldier and when I was last in the service I was discharged with a good record. In addition, this company I am with is a fine body of men and I got on well with everyone from officers downwards, the morale was high and the team spirit very evident. It was just the sort of unit I would be willing to serve with anywhere in the world.

Therefore I found it difficult to deliberately disobey orders, but there was no other way. I have dedicated my life to the cause of peace and a universal brotherhood of man. To this end we must adhere strictly to the Gospels and follow Christ in the way he has shown us. His message is one of love, not force and violence, and therefore rules out any form of military service. This, as we know, was held to in the early Church.

Well, tomorrow I will know what is to happen to me.

Army Camp

F.W.

A COURT MARTIAL IN ENGLAND

Fred's court martial took place yesterday and I was able to be present. . . . I arrived a good half hour before and met the defending officer. He was a young solicitor, very friendly, and had obviously taken some trouble to look up the right paragraphs in the military law and to make sure which ones applied to Fred's case. He complained that the only help he had had in this respect was from us and the Central Board for Conscientious Objectors. He told me that though he himself was not a pacifist he thought it was a disgrace that some simpler procedure was not laid down by the law whereby a soldier arriving at conscientious objections could make them known and be granted direct access to the appellate tribunal instead of having to go through what he called the ridiculous procedure of disobeying orders, being sentenced by court martial for this, and then having to receive three months' sentence to qualify for appeal to the tribunal.

The assistant adjutant, also quite a young man, who had to bring the charge against Fred, came up to us and exchanged a few words with the defending officer about the procedure. He turned to me apologetically and said of course he just had to do the job—they all realized that Fred's objections were genuine.

I was able to talk with Fred for a few minutes and then we were called into the court—the two officers, myself as visitor, and a young press man. The court consisted of three officers, the adjutant (a major) as president, and two others. A sergeant major stood by the door by which the accused was to enter. The three members of the court put on their caps and recited a form of words about administering justice, then with Bible in hand they took the usual court oath. They removed their caps and chatted a minute or two with the young officers. Then the accused was to be summoned (wearing cap but no belt). So their caps went on again—the three members of the court—the sergeant major barked an order to the accused and escort, the door banged open, and with a tremendous stamping of army boots in marched Fred and another corporal straight across the room.

'Halt! Left turn!' and they stood facing the adjutant. The adjutant read out in detail who he was and who the other officers were and asked

Fred whether he had any objection to being tried by any one of them. He said No. Then the offence was read out, a simple clear statement that he had refused an order to go on parade. Fred pleaded guilty. The adjutant said that the court would have no alternative but to give him a penalty as prescribed by the law. The defending officer read his piece in mitigation of the offence, quoting from the letter I had sent him, and asked that Fred should be given not less than three months' imprisonment in order to enable him to apply for a tribunal (this is the law and the usual procedure in such cases). The adjutant then asked Fred whether he was aware that he would have to be given a much more serious sentence than he would otherwise receive because he was asking to appear before the tribunal. 'Otherwise', the adjutant said, 'we would probably just bust you', (*i.e.* reduce to the ranks) 'but as it is we have to bust you *and* give you the three months, which is really two punishments, but we can't have an N.C.O. in detention.' I should say that after pleading guilty Fred was asked to sit down, and from that point on the general tone was quite a friendly one. The adjutant was a middle-aged man, very brusque and military but obviously quite sympathetic to Fred. Fred and his escort were then marched out again with barking and stamping of feet and the rest of us left the court for about five minutes. We were recalled and in marched Fred and escort again and his sentence of reduction to ranks and 96 days' military detention was given.

The adjutant almost apologized for the sentence and hastened to explain that the tribunal would probably take place in a few weeks and if they recommended Fred's discharge, as he had every reason to expect, the rest of his sentence would most likely be remitted. He would go to military detention at Shepton Mallet and would get quite good treatment there. The officer said this was lighter than civilian imprisonment as it involved no stigma in after life. He then asked Fred whether he had anything to say and Fred said he was very sorry he had given the military authorities all this trouble but he had decided that he had to serve Christ. The adjutant answered, 'Yes, yes, I understand', and Fred and escort were again marched out with barking and stamping of feet. Afterwards the adjutant said something to me about realizing that this was a genuine case of conscience and he added, 'Theirs not to reason why', but said that they could not make it too easy—otherwise all sorts of chaps would be coming along. He asked one or two things about the *bruderhof*—had we really no wages—and inquired how a man gets his cigarettes. I told him we supplied the cigarettes and that seemed to impress him. And so we parted with a general murmur of affability.

This is rather a detailed report as it is the first time, I believe, we have been involved in a court martial. I was very much surprised at the friendliness of it all, behind the veneer of military discipline.

In London the Central Board told me that the courts martial of

C.O.'s are generally like this if there is reason to believe that it is a genuine case. They get just a few cases each year. The army will now supply Fred automatically with a form to be filled in for application for the tribunal and it then rests with him to make his own application. This is what is called an advisory tribunal and is in fact the appellate tribunal (civil), but in the case of a regular soldier has power only to recommend discharge from the army.

FRED GOODWIN.

. . . A Month Later

Well, it's all over. . . . I don't feel jubilant as if I have won a victory, but rather a little humble and more determined. . . . Needless to say, I am glad it is over. And I know that I was not responsible, but God working in me led me to take this course. All I ask is that I can be of further service. . . . My stand as a C.O. was only another aspect of the witness we try to give.

All in the day's work, as they say. On the farm, in the kitchen, the office, mission work, going to prison, it's all part and parcel of the whole witness.

Army Camp

F.W.

A Letter from Poland

Often among my acquaintances I speak of the bruderhof and about community life based on the Christian commandment: Love your neighbour. What I have said has always aroused great interest and often heated argument when I defended your movement. Sometimes questions were put to me which I could not answer. . . . Your brotherly community is certainly making more and more progress. Meanwhile the communities and co-operatives in our country are beginning to disappear. The farmers prefer to work on their own rather than communally. Although I am not a Communist, I myself am in favour of the co-operatives as a higher form of husbandry, but in such co-operatives there must be a spirit of understanding and a common will to work. If those factors are missing there is no basis for further existence. In recent years the state and party officials, particularly the latter, forced the farmers to unite in co-operatives. The State gave help in money and machines to the co-operatives, but increased the taxes for individual workers to such an extent that they were almost ruined and had to join the co-operatives. Such farmers joined resentfully, and right from the beginning they decided not to work conscientiously but only to work enough to provide for the needs of themselves and their families. Now these 'co-operatives' are breaking up and their 'non-co-operative' members are praising our new leader Gomulka for his decision to support private farmers.

Opole, Poland

K.S.

NEWS OF THE BRUDERHOF COMMUNITIES

CALL-CONCERN-BRUDERHOF CONFERENCE AT WOODCREST

'We were all puzzled by the fact that when the first Christians followed Christ there was neither Greek nor Jew nor any other separation, but one united people. Now we are Quakers and Mennonites and Brothers and not fully in unity. We all want Christ to be our leader and we must find a way to lead us beyond our differences.'

This quotation from the Bruderhof report of the conference held at Woodcrest August 13th to 15th, 1956, shows the underlying desire of the three groups—the *Call* group of Friends, the Mennonites who publish *Concern*, and the Society of Brothers, which had met at West-town School, Pennsylvania, at Easter. Five sessions were held, with four Mennonites, four Friends, and four of the Brothers attending, and others of the Brothers coming in at times. The Mennonites were visiting Woodcrest for the first time and had come partly to experience the community life of the Society of Brothers. The Quakers were more concerned that we should work together to give a witness to a 'third voice' quite different from that of the current Protestant ecumenical movement—a witness to what this group calls the 'spiritual reformation'. They see it as a call to a gathered community of disciples of Christ.

Arising out of this discussion came the question as to just what was the true Church. It became clear that the Quaker group had felt itself challenged in the social field by the Bruderhof. The young Mennonites had been first stimulated by an article by Harold Bender on 'The Anabaptist Vision' which led them to consider the nature of the true Church, and they, too, have come to a stronger sense of their social responsibility as a group. It was questioned whether full community was necessary, and the Brothers said that although working together gives a clearer picture, they would be glad to see the Mennonites begin anything which the spirit of love might lead them to do that would bring them into one fellowship of sharing.

At another session Lewis Benson said that we had general agreement on the nature of the Church but were divided on the practice of it. He spoke of the vision of George Fox and the early Quakers, who felt the presence of Christ himself in their midst and said that through his death and resurrection Christ was here to lead us directly today. This meant a total break with the covenant of the old testament of religion, he said, with its trappings of priesthood, rites, and symbols. One of the Brothers expressed the hope that we could experience life together in all its aspects so that these questions could be discussed later from this common experience.

Later in the conference a Mennonite asked whether the vitality found in the Society of Brothers meant that the spirit of love had to be

expressed in just this way or whether it could take other forms. The Brothers replied that God could not be limited and that our present form must not become legalistic, but all must be ready to be led, to the end that all men become one and are united by the spirit of Jesus. Loving one another means not calling something 'mine' and leaving another out. It means doing away with lying, mammonism, impurity, and murder. The Society of Brothers will disappear but the way of Jesus will never disappear.

The Mennonites were asked to tell more of their hopes and present efforts. Of the original seven who formed the *Concern* group three are in Europe and four are teaching in the United States, one of these also serving as minister in a Negro church, and they feel a responsibility to awaken students to their new vision. Yet they feel that more may be required of them. The need for a full commitment to God was recognized, and a willingness to be used completely for his kingdom.

Towards the end of the meetings the question of a fourth publication was considered. It was decided to continue for the present to share experiences through the pages of *The Call*, *Concern*, and *The Plough*.

BRUDERHOF YOUTH AT WORKCAMPS

At Home at Wheathill

This past summer proved to be a very exciting time for our youth group. An international workcamp took place here, in the same way as last year, under the sponsorship of the *Nothelfergemeinschaft der Freunde*. Altogether about forty young people from several nations took part for shorter or longer periods, including several of our bruderhof youth. The whole community shared in the experience of the workcamp to a certain extent, and in a particular measure the youth did so because they often came up to the plateau in the evenings to join the camp in singing, folk-dancing, and sharing ideas. A few of us had the opportunity of taking full part in the camp, and this was really fine and valuable.

A workcamp has a lot in common with community living as we know it on the bruderhof, but of course there are some essential differences. For one thing, we tried hard to be frank with each other and to sort out our difficulties openly in the whole group, but we sometimes ran into trouble because there was simply no fundamentally common basis of conviction. Nevertheless, with many ups and downs (mostly ups) we had a good time together and a lot of work was accomplished.

The finest evenings were those when we told our life-stories. This brought us closer together than any other experience. We tried to be open with each other, without forcing anything. The majority of the campers were German, and what came out very strongly was the extent

that they had suffered from the war. Several had lost their fathers or brothers. As an American, who had experienced the war only impersonally and indirectly, I felt deeply moved by the stories told by these German young people. What struck me, too, was that so many of the campers recalled unhappy childhoods and had to tell of divorced parents and disunited homes. Some spoke honestly of living in great confusion, of not knowing how to use their lives. We young people of the bruderhof tried to speak as freely and personally about ourselves, our own seeking, and why we had chosen to use our lives as we are doing. Sometimes the talk led us to deeper considerations of a life of peace and unity and brotherhood, and this was always as much a challenge to the bruderhof youth as to the other campers.

The big question for most of the boys was war and re-armament, particularly of course because of the situation in Germany today. Our exchanges pointed out very clearly the decisive issues at stake and it came to us at the bruderhof as a call to go out now to Germany and speak to the young people who are in the midst of such a critical situation. (When this issue of *THE PLOUGH* appears, two of our young men will be travelling throughout Germany, holding meetings at universities, youth clubs—wherever we can find an invitation.)

The community was of course eager to meet all the workcampers, and so they often trooped down the hill to join in various communal activities such as festive mealtimes, musical evenings, or special meetings of one kind or another.

After all we were a *workcamp* and perhaps I should mention the work that was done. The school buildings that had been set up the previous summer were added to and began to look like something. On the rare fine days we worked outdoors, making paths and repairing a road, making a concrete runway to the chicken-houses, and levelling an old cowyard for a playground. In the more frequent rainy weather we painted and helped electrify the three school buildings and helped in various ways in the office and on the farm. By now the school is partially in use. Our junior school has moved into large, airy attractive rooms and we hope that the senior schoolchildren will have moved up from Cleeton Court by Christmas-time. The buildings of the school are a reminder of the work we did together and the fine time we had.

During the time of our own camp several bruderhof young people were taking part in other workcamp projects throughout England and as they returned it was very interesting to compare notes on our different experiences. We agreed heartily that it had been a tremendously stimulating and worthwhile summer and we had very high hopes for carrying on such activities in the future.

ELLEN YACHT

At Quaker Camp in Sussex

When I first heard I might be going to a workcamp I wasn't too enthusiastic—I wondered of what value such an experience could be to me, coming from the hard-working *bruderhof*. Wouldn't a conference or something of that nature be better? But gradually as the time of the camp grew nearer and uncertainty arose whether we could be spared from the strained work-situation at Wheathill, the possibility of our attendance became more and more attractive, especially after enthusiastic reports from two of the boys who had just come back from another camp. However, several hindrances were overcome and at last we could set off for Sussex.

We arrived at the Polegate Quaker Workcamp at supper-time, and on entering the spacious common dining-room of the Cottage houses we felt some apprehension at the sight of smartly dressed people sitting around a long polished table (I think in my nervousness I did not notice that it was actually composed of many small tables standing together) set with all the accessories of silver-ware and glass. This impression was quickly dispelled by several nights of trying to accustom oneself to straw mattresses and leaking tents!

Much that cannot be related depends on the personalities of those taking part in a project. We were all quite young—sixteen to eighteen—and for most it was the first experience of the kind. Doris and I thought ourselves lucky in coming from Wheathill, for, although neither of us is of the 'leader type' and neither had ever been responsible for arranging and planning for such a group, we found that having shared in many kinds of group experience made us able to help organize and plan social and other activities. What I find particularly good about a workcamp is that the participants all have to drop their reserve and use what gifts they have in the common experience, and I think that many who have before stood back and watched can in this way come to a fuller realization of their abilities.

The fact that we were from many nationalities and religions afforded a good opportunity to learn first-hand about the character of different countries and religious customs and practices and so on. I think most of us after hearing about Turkey and Norway began to realize how shockingly little we knew of these less prominent nations. Actually the great variety of backgrounds and religions presented certain difficulties in the religious observance and devotional times which naturally played quite a part in a Quaker workcamp. One found that the Quaker silent meeting is a widely acceptable form of worship, and although at the beginning the silences seemed tense, later—especially with the stimulus of spontaneous readings—I thought these times of silence quite profitable.

It seemed to me that some things were particularly valuable: the feeling of stability and a certain kind of discipline in that it was a Quaker camp, and the fact that certain standards and achievements were expected of us as a group. We felt our aim should be to strive for goals beyond self-interest and of the completely unselfish nature that can bridge the gap between people. At such a workcamp a real effort is made to overcome barriers and to increase understanding. In the daily work, planned and organized by campers elected for the purpose, much care and consideration were shown, the Work Committee, for example, making sure that everyone had a fair share and variety of work and could work with different people each day. I felt this was a definite aid to the relationships and understanding between people, and to the free group spirit.

It was thought important to get to know the people in the community immediately around the camp and to help them wherever possible. Our work-project was to assist the old people of the Cottage Homes. Since we were sharing their living facilities to a large extent we had a great deal of contact with the needy old people there and got to know them in the intimate surroundings of their homes and daily lives. I was very glad—knowing the need and insufficient means of many uncared-for old people—to find something that really seemed to offer a home and a certain security to them, and there was, I felt, in the atmosphere of closely inter-related living among such old people, quite a community feeling of friendliness and mutual help.

As to the value of the experience to me, coming from the bruderhof, it was a unique opportunity to live and work intensively with young people of other backgrounds and to find a really live contact on an informal basis and with a broader experience than is possible in a conference, where people meet almost solely on the intellectual level. And whereas in a conference there is a lot of talking and talking which never bears fruit in deeds, in a workcamp those who are concerned to put their desire to help into practice can really see something accomplished by their own hands.

One finds attracted to such projects many who are preparing to dedicate themselves to such life-tasks as mission work. Where concerned and active people from several countries and religions meet together there is an important point of contact which it could be hoped would develop into a common search for the truth and a way in which young people can best serve truth and love. Recognition of equality, of the same human and spiritual needs, might bring about a search for ways of peace and love and a closer trust in working together.

GILL SHAPLEY

BOOK REVIEW

THE SANE SOCIETY, by ERICH FROMM. Rinehart and Co., Inc., New York, 1955. \$5.

'We are not in need of new knowledge of how to live sanely—but in bitter need of taking seriously what we believe, what we preach and teach.'

Most readers of *THE PLOUGH* will respond to this statement by Erich Fromm and indeed to very much besides in this deeply discerning book which diagnoses so penetratingly the need of our sick society.

The Sane Society challenges the norms which are the foundation of Western civilization. The common assumption that twentieth century society is normal is searchingly questioned and if we look at the facts objectively and seriously we can hardly escape agreement.

Dr Fromm examines the crisis of modern man in a society in which he has become alienated from his world and his fellow men. He believes that the present trends, whether they be under capitalism, socialism, or communism, are leading to an insane society. By 'insanity' he means alienation from the world and from one another, and by 'sanity'—reconciliation, fellowship, and creative love.

The Western world has created a greater material wealth than any other society, and yet we destroy, in an arrangement we call 'war', millions of our fellows. Our economics are such that a good crop may be an economic disaster. The tragically familiar picture could be enlarged, but it is sufficient to justify Dr Fromm's assertion that 'if an individual acted in this fashion, serious doubts would be raised as to his sanity; should he, however, claim that there is nothing wrong—then the diagnosis would not be doubtful any more.' He strengthens his argument by showing that those countries which are the most peaceful, democratic, and prosperous reveal the most severe symptoms of mental disturbance. In such lands men have laboured and given their lives for a materially comfortable life. Must we not understand at last that 'man does not live by bread alone'?

Dr Fromm finds that the concept of mental health follows from the very conditions of human existence and is the same for man in all ages and all cultures. Mental health 'is characterized by the ability to love and create . . . by a sense of identity based on one's experience of self as the subject and agent of one's powers, by the grasp of reality inside and outside of ourselves' and this concept coincides essentially with the norms postulated by the great spiritual leaders of the human race.

In a masterly review of the three main political systems of the world—capitalism, socialism, and communism—Dr Fromm assesses the conflict between capital and labour as much more than the conflict between classes, but rather is it the conflict 'between the world of things

and their amassment and the world of life and its productivity'. He sees the sane society as one in which no man is a means to another's end and where greed, exploitativeness, possessiveness, and narcissism (about which he writes at length) have no place.

Having diagnosed the sickness, Dr Fromm turns to the 'Roads to Sanity' and points to what he calls 'humanistic communitarian socialism'. In considerable detail he analyses the Community of Work at Boimondeau in France and other community groups and sees in them a pattern for a society based on the true values of creative love and fellowship. But he is not unaware of the need for a uniting spirit and as a humanist he is confronted with the problem of how to create that spirit. He calls on all, 'whether we believe in the necessity of a new religion or in the continuation of the Judaeo-Christian tradition', to unite in 'firm negation of idolatry and find perhaps more of a common faith in this negation than in any affirmative statements about God'. That such a negation can bind men together in love and fellowship for more than the passing emotional surge appears to be doubted by Dr Fromm, for in the next paragraph he speaks almost hopefully and expectantly of a new universalistic religion with its emphasis on the practice of life rather than on doctrinal beliefs—a religion which 'will come into existence with the appearance of a new great teacher, just as they have appeared in previous centuries when the time was ripe'.

But has not Dr Fromm already answered this quest for an all-embracing religion (there is no lack of modern prophets!) in his own words from which we quoted at the beginning of this review?

We do not need new ideals or new spiritual goals. The great teachers of the human race have postulated the norms for sane living. To be sure, they have spoken in different languages, have emphasized different aspects and have had different views on different subjects. But, altogether, these differences were small; the fact that the great religions and theical systems have so often fought against each other, and emphasized their mutual differences rather than their basic similarities was due to the influence of those who built churches, hierarchies, political organizations upon the simple foundations of truth laid down by the men of the spirit. Since the human race made the decisive turn away from rootedness in nature and animal existence, to find a new home in conscience and brotherly solidarity, since it conceived first the idea of the unity of the human race and its destiny to become fully born—the ideas and ideals have been the same. In every centre of culture, and largely without any mutual influence, the same insights were discovered, the same ideals were preached. We, today, who have easy access to all these ideas, who are still the immediate heirs to the great humanistic teachings, we are not in need of new knowledge of how to live sanely—but in bitter need of taking seriously what we believe, what we preach and teach. The

revolution of our hearts does not require new wisdom—but new seriousness and dedication.

We know that brotherly community life has been lived through the centuries and is still being lived in the world today as a direct consequence of the timeless and clear teachings of Jesus Christ and of men's faith in him. What new wisdom can be added to that? If we take it seriously, we need search no further for the road to sanity.

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

At a time when so many people are confused in their loyalties to Christ and the State as nations resort to force to protect their 'interests' in other lands, Llewelyn Harries' article *Christian Pacifism* is a timely reminder of the way in which men have responded to Christ's call through the centuries. The second part, published in this number, presents something of the dilemma in which a Christian is bound to find himself in present-day society if he tries to make a compromise. He concludes that only a radical stand on grounds of conscience can be compatible with true Christian discipleship. The question has been very much alive among us at Wheathill during these past months and in the Forum we are publishing letters and a report about a young C.O. (Complete article to be published under the title *Christians and War*.)

In his book, *The Last Thirty Years*, Hans Joachim Schoeps gives a living impression of the Youth Movement in Germany after the First World War. Many who knew Eberhard Arnold regard the account of him given in the extract we are printing with the author's permission as very true to life. Without clinging to precise historical details, Prof. Schoeps has given a vivid sketch of the events of that time. One such event is also related by Emmy Arnold in the following article, *Hans-in-Luck*. Of all the memorable characters who have passed through our communities, Hans Fiehler is outstanding. The cartoon on page 105 was drawn by Louis Raemaekers when he saw the members of the Rhön-Bruderschaft crossing the border into Holland in 1937. He called it 'Unwanted'.

The many friends who have helped us in our social work have been interested to hear of the progress of the group of orphan children in our care at Wheathill since 1949. Reports have been published from time to time and it was decided to make the fifth report more widely read by including it in this number of THE PLOUGH. The photographs are by John Doidge and Jay Davis of Birmingham.

Since the small beginning at Asunción, Paraguay's capital city, in 1942, our group there has grown from a bruderschaft house to almost a bruderschaft community and Marjorie Parker-Gray's article gives a good idea of its many tasks.

SOME OF THE PUBLICATIONS OF THE PLOUGH PUBLISHING HOUSE

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A pamphlet telling how the war orphan children in the care of the Wheathill Bruderhof are growing up and taking their place in a community of men and women dedicated to the witness of brotherhood and peace.

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The Addresses of the Bruderhof Communities

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Bromdon, Bridgnorth, Shropshire

U.S.A.

Society of Brothers
Woodcrest, Rifton, New York State

Forest River Community
Fordville, North Dakota

PARAGUAY

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Primavera, Alto Paraguay

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