Paul Gundersen

INCORRIGIBLY INDEPENDENT

A Finnish life

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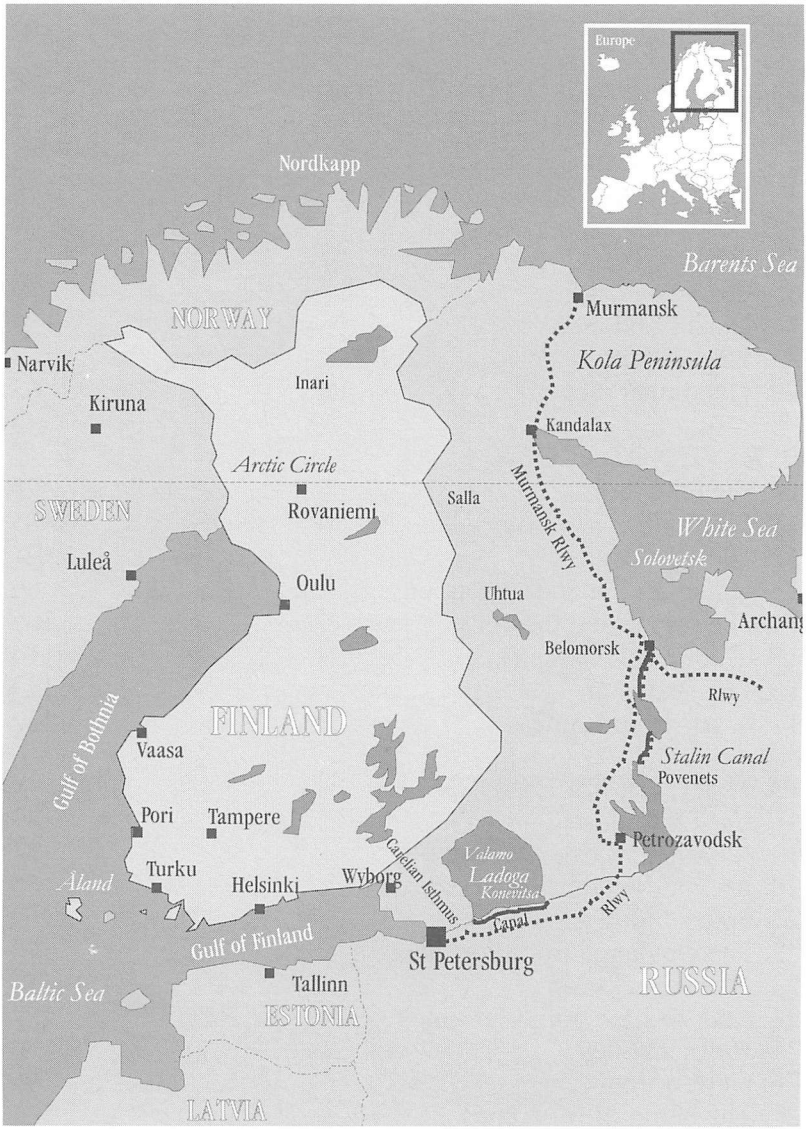
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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

As a young graduate I travelled from Finland to attend a conference in Switzerland. When I arrived, I was welcomed by an English academic, who directed me towards a task he wanted doing. When I suggested that I might first take my luggage to my room, he snapped, "You Finns are the world's biggest individualists!"

I felt flattered, rather than chastened. Against all the odds, my country had just emerged from World War II with its freedom intact, in spite of both the Soviet Union's desire to annex us and pressure from Germany. It seemed unlikely that this would have been the case without a certain stubbornness on our part.

Finland became independent, after over 700 years of foreign domination, four years before I was born. So my life spans most of my country's history as a free nation. In the years during and after World War II, this freedom was extremely fragile - and only preserved by the agonizing decisions made by our leaders. My own experiences, not least as a business traveller in the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, have convinced me of the importance of individual choices of aims and values. I hope with this book to show that any person, through these choices, can find a meaningful purpose for life.

Incorrigibly Independent is not so much a biography as a journey of discovery into the past, present and future. Without the encouragement and assistance of my wife, Eva, the book would not have been written. We want in particular to thank Mary Lean who generously offered to edit the English translation of the original Swedish language edition.

Helsinki 1999
Paul Gundersen

PART I: THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

1. Tell us about your mistakes!

Late one evening soon after Christmas 1991 a friend from Estonia phoned me. Could I take the ferry from Helsinki to Tallinn so that we could talk?

Estonia's economic progress over the last eight years has been astonishing. But in 1991 the situation was so acute that there was only enough milk for children under three and enough bread to last each family half a week. People felt cold all the time – even when they were indoors.

My friend, who was a member of the cabinet, considered that the situation in business was equally serious. " Motivation and trust in industry are at zero point," he complained. "No one trusts anyone. Many regard the market economy as a free-for-all where you can line your own purse at the expense of others." The chief editor of a business paper compared the situation with the American Wild West in the nineteenth century.

Experts from the West had already sailed into East Europe with courses in market economy, the Estonians told me. But this was no magic recipe for success. Sharp businessmen from the West smelled easy cash – and so did equally sharp businessmen from the East, who came forward as consultants and partners in common enterprises. A number of West Europeans were swindled out of their money. Many burnt their fingers and withdrew.

My friend asked me to arrange a seminar for entrepreneurs on how to create the moral foundations for a market economy.

When I asked the minister what he and his friends most wanted to learn, he said, "Tell us about your mistakes!" I was surprised – this did not sound particularly professional. But he repeated, "Precisely. Tell us about your mistakes." Gradually I understood what he meant. The Estonians had already had their fill of theories and good advice from the West. They longed to meet people who could admit to making mistakes, but who had learned from them and pressed on.

I invited six industrialists from different Western countries to join in. Before we travelled to Estonia, they asked how to prepare. I suggested that none of us should present a business theory, nor anything that others had done. "Make an inventory of what lay behind your successes, and your disasters too!"

The seminar was held in the former Communist Party boardroom with its dark furniture, red walls and padded doors. On the second morning I asked the participants which subjects they would like us to focus on. One of the entrepreneurs exclaimed eagerly, "Don't you have more mistakes you can tell us about?" That was one commodity we visitors did not lack.

Our open dialogue made the Estonians feel they were on the same level as us. We had not come as experts who knew best, but to explore new ways together. One young Estonian entrepreneur came to me afterwards and said, "All my working life I have lived under Communism. I have never been to the West. For the first time in my life here in my own country, I felt that I could talk freely about what was really going on inside me. Fifty years of Communism have made it an ingrained habit not to talk about personal things, either at home or outside." Another participant added, "We must free ourselves from our 'homo sovieticus' mentality."

An executive from the cooperative movement heard about the seminar and asked for a similar one for 40 local leaders from some twenty cities, also focussing on trust and motivation, rather than business technique. The board had first approached a large Scandinavian cooperative organization, but had received an answer which indicated complete incomprehension. People in the

West did not grasp how deeply the past decades had affected the whole inner mentality of the East. We also had requests from other Eastern cities – as far away as Novosibirsk.

The following summer I met Frits Philips, former chief executive of the Philips group, at an industrial conference. Still vital at 87 years old, he spoke about recreating relations with Eastern Europe. He had a personal link: his great-grandmother and Karl Marx's mother were sisters; and Marx worked on his books in Philips' great-grandparents' home in Zaltbommel in the Netherlands. Philips was thinking along the same lines as our Estonian hosts. "Our task in the Eastern world now is to share our experience of where we have gone wrong," he said.

In 1991 I asked a decision-maker from another Baltic country what help he most wanted from outside. His country's economy was in ruins. But he, too, asked for "living contact with people who have something essential to share from their own life and experiences". "We have lost the capacity to trust each other," he went on. "The human capital has been destroyed during the past fifty years. It must be rebuilt. Few of those who come from the West do anything about it."

Soon afterwards, in St Petersburg, I told a 45-year-old Russian businessman about this conversation. He pointed at himself and answered, "Here you see an example of destroyed human capital." Earlier in life he had studied the influence of French literature on 18th century Russia, and had nearly completed his doctoral thesis when he was told that the author he had studied represented anti-Marxist attitudes. His work was declared null and void and he was forced to leave the university. Later on he got a job in a factory. He continued, "What I most want for myself and our people today is for us to restore our inner equilibrium." A professor used nearly the same words, "The inner mirror which shows me right and wrong has been broken into splinters. How can I find inner peace and freedom?"

But do we in the West have inner equilibrium? The chief executive of a company where I worked for many years committed suicide. He was much admired, but when the difficulties piled up,

he was overwhelmed. More and more responsible people in business and industry are seeking psychiatric help. As Niilo Hämäläinen, the former chairman of the Finnish TUC, once told me, an increasing hardness is penetrating Western industrial societies. Unless something is done, we will one day have to pay a high price for this.

A 55-year-old civil engineer told me that he had just been sacked from the company where he had worked for more than 25 years. "I thought my job was essential and therefore safe. There had been no complaints about my way of working. None of my superiors came to me beforehand to talk about the matter. One morning I found a letter on my desk, asking me to leave before lunch." His case was not unique. Pehr Gyllenhammar of the Swedish Volvo group said in an interview in 1992, "It has become fashionable to run enterprises with one's eyes fixed on the profitability of the shares and to lead with a certain brutality."

Intelligence and wisdom are not the same thing. Can the much-prized market economy, as it is practised today, really show the way for the world? Most of those who quote its father, Adam Smith, forget that he was also a professor of moral education and ethics, and spoke of "the white sphere of godliness which is planted in each one of us". True morality has little to do with what you can get away with, and everything to do with the inner dynamics of business life, with aims, motivation, how to develop the best in colleagues and subordinates, how to create harmonious teams and trust. Above all people in industry need a vision they can be proud of – and this has to have room for everyone, from the lowliest employee to the chief executive.

My own most important discoveries in 50 years of involvement with industry have had more to do with questions of vision and purpose than with the configurations of professional life. As I get older, I appreciate more and more the simple things which I learnt from my parents' eventful lives – and through the blows and adversities, joys and mistakes of my own. It seems to me that personal life and business life are inextricably linked: you cannot

divorce one from the other. The most important decisions of our business lives are the choices we make, often at quite a young age, about our personal values.

2. A Norwegian goes East

It was a game of chess that brought my parents together.

My father, Ragnar Gundersen, was a Norwegian who grew up in Holland. He came to Finland in 1912, to work as inspector of timber shipments from St Petersburg, Helsinki and West Finland. When the war stopped all shipments, he was at a loose end. One day he had nothing better to do than play chess with the managing director of the Hamfelt timber export company in Helsinki, when the phone rang. It was Emil af Hällström, owner of the Olkkala estate in the county of Vihti, 60 kilometres north-west of the capital, saying that he needed someone to work in his estate office. My father got the job – and there met my mother, Elina, who was af Hällström's daughter.

My father came from a seafaring family. One ancestor was a pirate captain who broke the English blockade of Denmark and Norway at the end of the Napoleonic wars to bring grain to the starving people of Nøtterø, near Tønsberg. Grandfather was the tenth sea captain in the line. His ship was based in Amsterdam and he got home to Norway so rarely that in 1898 he brought his wife and children to Holland. Occasionally, when the school holidays coincided with one of his trips, he would take one of the children with him. As a young boy Father went with him to the Northern Arctic and on to Archangelsk, the terminus of an old Norwegian-Russian trade route.

When Father was fourteen, a message arrived that grandfather

had died in an epidemic in the Western Atlantic. The next day Father and his older brother left school so that they could support the family. At that time there was no widow's pension. My father got a job as an errand boy and continued his education at evening classes in a commercial school. Four years later he accepted the offer of a job in Finland.

To people in Holland, Finland was a god-forsaken outpost with a merciless climate, an unknown country suppressed by the Russians. Father, who was shy by nature, found it hard to adapt. The mood was heavier than in Amsterdam, with its colourful street life. The people were outwardly reserved, sometimes sullen and not particularly interested in a young foreigner. But he began to study Finnish – stimulated, no doubt, by his growing interest in Elina af Hällström – and to take a lively interest in Finnish history and politics. He was also soon employed by the Norwegian Legation as First Secretary.

With his Norwegian background and interest in history, Father well understood his new countrymen's longing for freedom. Finland had been part of the Swedish kingdom for more than 600 years until 1809, when Russia defeated Sweden. Since then, it had been a Grand Duchy under the Russian Tsar.

In many ways the 19th century was a good period for Finland. Self-rule prevailed under the benevolent Tsar Alexander II, science and culture flourished and, in the 1850's, a new Senate was set up. (My maternal grandfather was later elected a member.) But, as in the Baltic countries in recent decades, no promise of special privileges could satisfy the longing for freedom. The dream of an independent Finland persisted in spite of Russia's benevolence.

The Finnish language had been supressed for centuries: all higher education was in Swedish. A Finnish national movement, led by men like JW Snellman, now got a strong wind in its sails. My mother's father had studied for his Master's exam in Swedish and spoke Swedish at home. Like many of his contemporaries he now changed his home language to Finnish and gave all his chil-

dren ringing Finnish names.

At the end of the 19th century, Russia's attitude to Finland changed for the worse. The worldview of the new Tsar, Nikolai II, was pan-Slavic. He initiated a process of Russianization, under the bonehard Governor-General Bobrikov. Finnish resistance grew, starting among the students. My grandfather used to walk for hours along the Esplanade in Helsinki with kindred spirits, discussing what to do next. Then a young student, Eugen Schauman, shot first Bobrikov and then himself, in the Governor's palace. Tension grew and resistance became more active and concrete.

Right up to the World War, ruthless Russianization and the annihilation of Finnish autonomy continued. The Governor exiled our future president, Svinhufvud, and others to Siberia. My grandfather was listed as "extremely compromised", and his family lived in continuous fear that his turn would come soon.

Russian became the main subject in the schools, with the teachers making common cause with the pupils to sabotage the teaching. My uncle attended seven years of Russian lessons, without learning anything whatsoever. When the Russian inspector came to check the tuition, one teacher told his pupils to raise their hands whenever he asked a question: "If you have even the slightest idea of the answer, put up your left hand. If you don't, put up your right hand!"

Civil servants, students and farmers formed the core of the nationalist movement, which aimed to create a foundation for independence and to be prepared when the chance came. Once again, there were parallels with events in 1989 in the former Eastern Bloc countries. Even the most intelligent brains did not foresee what would happen.

Many sincere patriots in Finland, my grandfather among them, were unconscious of the injustices which prevailed in their own society, and which really had nothing to do with Russia. Poverty was flagrant among the landless in the countryside. The crofters who worked on the big farms had a hard

life and nothing brighter to look forward to. There were also grave injustices in industry, which fuelled the class war. When new winds started to blow in Russia, they awakened both anxiety and hope in Finland.

During World War I some 1,500 young Finns from all classes and political constellations secretly left the country through Western Lapland and Sweden, to receive military training in Germany. Secret negotiations had previously been conducted with Sweden about such training, but the request was turned down. These so-called *jääkärit* were animated by the thought that when the time was ripe, Finland would need trained men for its liberation army. They received their baptism of fire in the battles against Russia on the German Eastern Front.

Finland's chance came in the chaos which followed the Russian Revolution. The Finnish government proclaimed independence on 6 December 1917. Lenin gave his approval, calculating that the working class would soon take power and bring Finland into the Soviet Union. One hundred thousand Russian soldiers who had executed their officers were still stationed in Finland.

Within a few weeks a large proportion of Finland's workers had joined the Red Guards, which were being formed everywhere, particularly in Southern Finland, and subsequently became the core of the Red forces who fought for a Bolshevik revolution in Finland. Pre-existing social and political tensions quickly turned the independence struggle into a bloody civil war.

The Reds seized power in Helsinki, Tampere, the industrial centres and around the big estates in the South of Finland, including my mother's home at Olkkala in Vihti county. The Finnish government fled to the western city of Vaasa, and appointed Carl Gustaf Mannerheim, who had been a successful general in the Tsar's army, Commander in Chief. The Finnish *jääkärit* were called home from the German Eastern Front and a liberation army, consisting mainly of peasants, was established in Vaasa. This 'White' army quickly began to penetrate southwards towards the powerbase of the Red Guards.

My mother's background, like my own, represented two widely different cultures. Her father's family consisted mainly of clergy and scientists, some of them distinguished. His great-grandfather was the chemist Johan Gadolin, and his grandfather, GG Hällström, was a physics professor who became the Chancellor of the University of Turku, then Finland's capital. When Turku burnt down in 1827, the university moved to Helsinki and Hällström became Chancellor there. He was ennobled by Tsar Nikolai I for his scientific contribution.

My grandmother, by contrast, was born in one of the poorest counties on the Russian border. Her parents were so poor that when she was just a few weeks old, they took her to the village centre to be auctioned. A visiting clergyman and his wife saw her lying in the big hall and decided to take her. They gave her a good education, which was rare for women at that time. Grandmother brought into the family the indomitable spirit without which her forebears on the north-eastern borders could not have survived. She had twelve children, seven of whom survived childhood; my mother was the third oldest. In spite of all these pregnancies and all her domestic tasks, Grandmother learned book-keeping and mastered the business affairs of the estate at Olkkala.

Olkkala had come into the family through Johan Gadolin, who had sold it to his son-in-law, GG Hällström, at the beginning of the 19th century. The estate was idyllic in every way. In my grandfather's day, it comprised some 12,000 acres, with its own saw mill, brick factory, electricity works, timber mill and narrow-gauge railway. The mansion, rising majestically on a hill, was the hub of the county's social life. Close by stood the original main building, painted red, where my mother was born. Below, a winding river led to a beautiful lake.

Grandfather ran the estate with the help of his eldest son, Eljas, who had a degree in agriculture. In many ways, Olkkala was a model farm. Grandfather was a pioneer in the area of forest conservation; and Eljas initiated the export of agricultural products to St Petersburg. But because Grandfather did not want to sell forest, he had taken out big loans to expand the cultivated land –

and only procured extra worries.

Grandfather was a sincere patriot, who represented the centre of the nationalist movement, which stood by established Finnish laws in their opposition to Russianization. To him, law and order were paramount. In the Senate, he voted against a shortening of the prevailing 48-hour week and, on the estate, he resisted Eljas's proposals for reform. For the Reds, he seemed the incarnation of capitalism. Right up to the last moment, Grandfather refused to believe that things would get so bad that the basic structure of society would be threatened.

3. Drama at Olkkala

At first World War I had little impact on Olkkala. But one day a decree arrived announcing that the Tsar's army needed all available steel, and that the rails of the farm's fifteen-kilometre-long private railway were to be confiscated. Shocked, Grandfather and Eljas came up with a strategem to fend off the threat.

They prepared carefully for the inspection, headed by a Polish colonel and a Russian minister of state, which would decide the railway's fate. They erected stations with impressive names along the narrow track and summoned all the villagers for action. When the day came, Grandfather and Eljas met the inspectors at the mainline railway station. As the train travelled along the private line, people embarked and disembarked at every stop. Such a commotion had never been seen before on the Olkkala railway. The colonel remarked that many people seemed to use the line. "Yes," said Grandfather, "it fills an urgent need for passenger transport as well as the growing traffic of goods."

Grandmother received the delegation at the front door of the mansion with overflowing cordiality. She had prepared a banquet with an extravagant menu – and served the alcohol used to cure the ailments of the cows instead of vodka, which she did not keep in the house. First there were exquisite hors d'oeuvres followed by bouillon with croutons. Then the maids in black lace bore in a fluffy egg soufflé with crayfish tails. Next followed cold salmon decorated with stuffed eggs. After that came steak accompanied

by a great variety of vegetables, and finally ice-cream with berries. Grandmother had instructed the kitchen to give exactly the same food to all the accompanying soldiers. This was always her principle with guests' coachmen.

The dinner went on and on. The minister of state got increasingly boisterous, laughing noisily at his own jokes. The sisters dared not look at their brother Eljas who could hardly control his laughter. Over coffee in the great hall, my mother played for the guests and her younger sisters sang a languishing love-duet. Heavy clouds of cigarsmoke filled the air. Later the ladies withdrew and the official meeting started. When the colonel got up to express his thanks for the magnificant reception, he said that he was now entirely convinced of the extraordinary importance of the railway for the county.

At the beginning of the century a group of brilliant atheists, led by Rolf Lagerborg, had a major impact on academic circles in Finland. They also exerted some influence at Olkkala. But before the outbreak of World War I my mother and a couple of her sisters had been gripped by a Christian awakening. Mother was studying in Helsinki to become a concert pianist, and she had always been responsible for the music at the mansion balls. Now, with a wholeheartedness and narrowness characteristic of the young, she made a break with her earlier lifestyle. She refused to play except for "the glory of God", and started a Sunday school and social activities among the crofter children. Her father disliked her mingling so much with the workers.

The minister occasionally asked Mother to help out at church. Once when they were preparing an evening programme, the committee members were bitterly disunited. Mother stood up and said resolutely, "If we continue in such a spirit, there will be no blessing on the whole festival. I suggest that we all go down on our knees and ask God to forgive our critical attitude and give us unity." The minister could not very well refuse to kneel, but after this episode he never again asked Mother to help.

The family did not support Mother in her new approach to life.

Of course they approved of "higher values" and selflessness, but they found her desire to take God seriously in every aspect of her daily life embarrassing. Mother told me later that she went to extremes which a more mature person would have avoided, but that she felt that if she did not keep clear margins, she would gradually lose what she had found.

Every morning she got up early for two hours of Bible reading and prayer. Many years later she said it was only through this that she had received the strength to keep to the road she had chosen. Her faith was her capital for the rest of her life – and the immediate future was to prove its value.

Olkkala had already felt the effect of the political unrest before independence was declared in December 1917. In November the Red militia had forced their way into the mansion looking for weapons. They ransacked the whole house, slashing the furniture and tapestries with bayonets and knives. Grandfather decided to send the younger members of the family to Helsinki, which was safer, even though the Reds were in charge in the city. Only Eljas was to stay behind.

Grandfather wanted Mother to leave while it was still possible but she was uncertain whether to go. Day in and day out she prayed for clarity. One morning after a long time in prayer she knew that her place was in Olkkala. She defied Grandfather and remained on the farm.

At the beginning of 1918, the Reds introduced total control of the district. No one could leave without a pass from the Red headquarters. All letters were censored. Olkkala was isolated, although my father was able to deliver simple messages through the Norwegian Legation. Many of the farmworkers sympathized with the Reds. There were reports of violence in many places. The family prepared themselves for the worst.

One day five Home Guard members rode into Olkkala and asked the way to the local Home Guard headquarters. The Home Guard was a voluntary military organization which had been set up to strengthen the liberation movement. The peasants of the

West Coast province and the students formed its backbone. In Vihti, which was controlled by the Reds, there was no Home Guard – the visitors had confused its name with another county. Grandmother gave them food and they hurried away.

However, one of the women on the farm informed the Reds what had happened. Grandmother wanted to send Grandfather, who was sick, to a doctor in another area, but the horse was stopped before it left the barn. "No-one is to leave!" yelled one of the grooms. "No doctors are needed here!" Grandmother immediately sent Grandfather to bed. The family watched anxiously through the window, as darkness closed in. Then they heard alarming sounds in the distance. Mother fell on her knees, opened her Bible and read Psalm 91, which put into words the hope she wanted to hold on to: "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in Him will I trust. Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night for He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

A few minutes passed. Then some 40 Red Guardsmen stormed forward to the main building. Half of them forced their way in. Among them were some released convicts. "Where are the arms which the five Home Guards brought?" they shouted. They ran into the rooms, upturning chests-of-drawers and cupboards, and rushed onto the second floor, where Mother and Grandmother were sitting at Grandfather's bedside.

In the corridor the guards met Malmström, the office manager, and their leader hit him in the face with the butt-end of a rifle. Blood streamed from his nose and eyes. Grandmother rushed out of the bedroom and shouted, "Don't hit him!" The Red Guardsmen, who in spite of all their searching had not found a single weapon, tried to force Malmström to take them to the cellar. Grandfather struggled up from his bed and shouted, "Don't harm Malmström!" Two shots rang out and the manager fell to the floor with a thud. Mother and Grandmother managed to drag him to the guestroom, before the Red Guards pushed them aside. Mother forced her way back with a glass of water. Malmström was in agony. Mother bent over him and said quietly, "The blood

of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin." Malmström was trying to say something, but the Red Guards now forced Mother away. Two more shots rang out, and Malmström lay still.

In the bedroom Mother and her parents heard the men charge their rifles and prepared for the worst. A group of men made their way into the room and stood beside the bed. "Out with the women," they roared. Neither Mother nor Grandmother moved an inch. "If you don't leave voluntarily, we will remove you by force," the leader said. Mother looked straight at him and answered, "You do not separate father and daughter!" In that moment she remembered Luther's words, "In the most extreme emergency the weakest sigh for help resounds like thunder in heaven." She felt as if her fear had been blown away.

Four guards raised their rifles with fixed bayonets and aimed at Grandfather. Mother threw herself against his chest. A huge guardsman reached out to move Mother so that the others could shoot Grandfather. But as he stepped forward his hands fell down, and he stopped as if paralyzed. The other three were also helpless. It was quiet for a moment. Then their leader shouted, "We will give you five minutes to confess where the arms are hidden." The men left the room.

Mother folded her hands in prayer and thanked God. Soon a group stormed back into the bedroom. Before they had uttered a word, Mother said calmly, "Now stop it. Don't do any more wrong!" "Where are the weapons?" growled one of the men. Grandfather ripped open his shirt and uncovered his breast. "Shoot me!" he said, "there are no arms here!" The guardsmen looked at him in astonishment. Suddenly the leader said, "Well, he's so old that he'll die soon anyway." The guards left the room and the gang went to the pantry, where they took all the food they could find. Mother heard one of them say to his comrades, "I cannot make head or tail of this house. I have never seen such womenfolk in my life!" Another pointed at Mother and added, "That one is the most dangerous." At half past midnight they left.

There was no way to warn the neighbouring farm, Kourla, where Mother's oldest brother, Eljas, lived with his Estonian

wife, Linda, who was expecting their first child in a fortnight. Eventually one of the Kourla servants managed to get through to Grandmother on the phone. "All is not well here," she said guardedly. Grandmother asked, "How is Eljas?" "Not so well," the voice answered. "Is he dead?" Grandmother asked directly. "Yes, that is so." The Red Guards had gone straight to Kourla from Olkkala, forced Eljas to open all the doors and the cellar, and, when they found no arms, shot him in revenge. Next day Mother heard that the five young Home Guards had been caught and executed.

After a few more days of agonizing tension and alarms, the family heard heavy boot-steps approaching the house once again. Grandfather said farewell to Mother. "Dear little friend," he said. "Thank you for the prayers with which you tried to help us." Then he added, "Which have helped us." Something had happened in his heart.

To the family's relief it was only Olkkala's old bailiff who had come to tell them what had happened. All the workers who had not joined the Reds had been tried in the field and tortured. Then came the worst news: the bailiff's own son, Eljas's best friend, had just been shot. Today the two friends rest in a common grave at Vihti church.

In spite of these traumatic events and the lack of communication, my parents' romance had lived on. After some weeks, my father managed to make telephone contact through the Norwegian Legation to announce that he had permission to visit Olkkala. My parents announced their engagement at Grandfather's bedside.

When Father returned to Helsinki, he contacted the Red Guards' headquarters. He managed to persuade a well-known socialist, Ryömä, to travel with him to Vihti. Ryömä enjoyed the confidence of the Red troups, but, as an idealistic Communist, opposed violence.

When they arrived in Vihti, they went straight to the Red headquarters. The top man had gone away for a few hours and, after long negotiations, they managed to persuade his deputy to grant

a pass for Grandfather to go to Helsinki for medical care. Without losing a minute, they got Grandfather away by horse. When the regular Chief of Staff returned, he was furious to discover that the man who personified the enemy to him had managed to flee.

Father had also tried to get a pass for Mother, but this was out of the question. News began to get through that the war was turning against the Reds – and with it the alarming rumour that they had decided to execute Mother and Grandmother, because they were witnesses to their excesses.

To Mother and Grandmother the prospect of freedom was nearly unbelievable. The Reds had confiscated the whole of Olkkala and declared that the estate was "the property of the people". The family were only allowed to retain the houses and garden. The church was occupied by Red soldiers, and the minister's son was murdered. All the men left in the district had been conscripted into the Red Guard, who were preparing to fight to the finish.

At the end of April 1918, a message reached Olkkala: the Red staff with a troup of mounted soldiers was about to abandon its headquarters and move eastwards. They planned to ride through Olkkala and shoot the women, and they could arrive within half an hour. The tension was intolerable. Then a new message arrived: the marching order had been changed. The White troups were advancing faster than calculated and the Reds had had to take a route through the neighbouring county to avoid being surrounded. But even when the main force had left Vihti, snipers continued to shoot at the farm windows at night.

Father and the rest of the family in Helsinki were desperate. According to one rumour Olkkala had been set on fire and Mother had died. Another said that the Reds had got a cannon to shoot at the farm.

Meanwhile Father had been making the most of his Norwegian passport and diplomatic contacts. He once travelled alone in a train with Reds, carrying chests with medicine from Helsinki destined for the White troops. A more accurate investigation

would have revealed that the "medicine" consisted mainly of arms.

Soon after the White troops conquered Helsinki, my mother was able to travel there to meet her fiancé, father and sisters. The euphoria in the city was indescribable. After more than 100 years, Russian rule had come to an end. Everywhere you could see the blue-white flag, which had been forbidden since my mother's childhood.

Grandfather was a broken man. He could not live on at Olkkala. The son who was to continue his lifework was dead. His younger son was an impractical scientist, incapable of taking care of a big estate. So he decided to sell Olkkala, at the worst imaginable time, after four generations in the family's possession. Violent inflation took care of the rest of the family's wealth.

At the beginning of the century my grandfather had taken out a generous life insurance policy in favour of his daughters in case they ran into difficulties in later days. When Mother's policy was due for payment, 50 years later, she asked me to accompany her to the bank. We withdrew the sum which should have secured a carefree old age. It was just about enough to purchase an elegant hat.

The war was over. The victorious commander, Mannerheim, urged generosity towards the losing side. But a civil war creates deep bitterness, and the desire for revenge was strong. Lawsuits and executions followed. Many of the Vihti Red Guardsmen were among those shot. The war and its consequences accentuated the class struggle in Finland for decades to come.

The wave of revenge sweeping through the country caused deep pain to Mother. She had forgiven her brother's murderer, although she and Eljas had always been close. The fact that faith in God had also become a reality in his life eased her grief. She wrote in her diary: "We long to see our people, with all its different elements, being gripped by Him of whom it is written: 'For He is our peace, He who has made both of us a unity and destroyed the barrier which kept us apart.' We may be living in

the times of the setting sun. Perhaps we shall not see what we long for. May we nevertheless get a foretaste of true inner brotherhood." Mother knew that no superficial formula could heal the wounds.

In the shadow of the tragedies Finland had lived through, but yet at the dawn of a new age, my parents were married on a summer day in 1919. Little more than a year later I was on my way.

4. Lost halo

I was born in a Finland that was free for the first time in its history. Expectancy and faith in the future dominated, but bitterness and the lust for revenge were still widespread.

We lived in the old part of Helsinki in a picturesque *jugend* house opposite the Andreas Church. Further up the street stood the fortress-like building of the telephone company. My father had been there when the last battle was fought from corner to corner in 1918. He pointed out to me the buildings from which the Red snipers had fired at the liberation troops.

Grandfather and Grandmother had now moved to Helsinki. Grandfather did not live long, but Grandmother was indomitable. My brother, Leif, and I adored her. She was small, round as a ball and always cheerful.

My father now worked in a small industrial firm. He had lived into the events of the past years so fully that he applied for Finnish citizenship. In the evenings he struggled with the fifteen cases and other intricacies of Finnish grammar, and he mastered Swedish too, for the sake of our Swedish-speaking relatives. But deep down he remained Norwegian. When the Norwegian skating champions competed in Helsinki, he would forget himself completely, shouting and waving his Norwegian flag.

My mother had done well in her final exam as a pianist and by the time she got married she had already played Saint-Saens'

piano concerto with the Helsinki city orchestra. The road was wide open for studies in Germany and a career as a concert pianist. But because she had promised to seek God's will first in everything, she felt that she had to be sure that this was what He wanted.

Family and friends urged Mother not to miss her chance, but after days spent in prayer, she decided to put her family and church work first and abandon her plans of career. Later she stressed that for someone else in a similar situation an opposite choice could have been right. She used her music in domestic and church settings, rather than concert halls, and as far as I know never regretted her decision.

The Free Church became the outer framework for my parents' Christian commitment. Mother had grown up in the Lutheran State Church, but Father found its solemn liturgy alien. He became chairman of the congregation of the Congregational Andreas Church, just fifteen metres from our front door. On Sunday mornings I would sit in the balcony, where I was in less danger of being caught reading Wild West stories during the long sermons. From there I could see Mother's slender figure stealing to her regular seat – she was always late, even though, or perhaps because, we lived so near.

My father invested all his free time in the congregation and in the development of a hostel for the homeless, where Mother organized activities for the women. Such voluntary initiatives were crucial in the 1920s, when social help from the authorities was limited and sporadic.

The Andreas Church had remarkably wide horizons, at a time when many in Finland believed that after all the hardships we should look after ourselves. Baron Paul Nicolay, who was famous for his Christian student work in Russia, worshipped there when he came to Helsinki and the congregation also cooperated closely with the China Inland Mission. Pastors, conference participants and missionaries often stayed in our home and opened a window on the world for me.

When I was five, Dr DE Hoste, leader of the China Inland

Mission, and his collaborator, Dr WAP Martin, came for dinner. Hoste placed my little brother and me on his knees and said to Mother: "One of these two I want out in the world for God's work!" I replied, "Yes, but the only thing is, how can I learn to eat with sticks?" It was the first and last time we met, but Hoste's words were prophetic.

We also came into contact with the outside world through Mother's brother-in-law, Aleksi Lehtonen, who later became Archbishop of Finland. He built strong bonds with the World Student Christian Federation in Britain and North America, through his friendship with John Mott and its other leaders. Our families spent many holidays together, and we got used to meeting the Lehtonens' British and American guests.

Lehtonen was jovial and popular with us boys, but he was also High Church and patriarchal. When we were staying with him in the Bishop's palace he would announce every evening, at the stroke of nine, "To the chapel!" We had to drop whatever we were discussing and walk in single file to the chapel, sometimes to my father's annoyance. I was the model for a cherub on the fresco behind the altar. But with the years, moisture corroded away most of the painting, including my halo.

My mother was kindhearted and, one might have thought, unobtrusive. But behind the gentle surface she had strong opinions and a rather unbending character. Her battle to keep her faith as a young woman had left its marks. Cinema, card-playing and theatre were banned, in spite of Father's appeals for a more liberal home policy.

As a teenager before World War I Mother had seen one of the first movies to come to Finland. It was one of those films where all the characters tripped around like crows. At the end a man and his wife walked up a hill where they met a flirtatious lady. The husband gave his wife a push in the back, she rolled down the hill and the husband walked away with the fast lady. "I shall never go to a cinema again," Mother exclaimed heatedly. It was only after World War II that she finally agreed to see *Mrs Miniver* and was

so taken with it, that she recounted the story in detail to her sister in the country. Her description lasted longer than the film itself.

Mother may have been narrow-minded in some ways, but she was so free and happy as a person that parties in our home had more colour than in our relatives', in spite of alcohol never being served. Music, games, singing and excited discussion filled the evening. Leif and I never felt the slightest pressure, open or disguised, that we should make a "decision for God". As small children we always looked forward to Mother reading the Bible to us. She made it natural, too, to pray, never following a formula, but talking with God about all the daily things that moved in our minds.

When I was thirteen, I attended a Free Church camp in the Western Archipelago. On the final evening, the pastor walked round the hall praying for us to be "saved". Perhaps because my father was chairman of the main congregation, he stopped at my chair and prayed aloud for my poor soul. I decided never to participate in a church camp again. But this was not a rebellion against God. When I fell ill with pleurisy and nearly died, I trusted that Father's and Mother's prayers would save me.

Mother's ability to listen to others and enter into their lives without judgement probably explained why so many young people came to her seeking advice on their love affairs, career choices and disappointments. "You felt that she understood," one woman said 40 years later. Mother prayed with her friends, gave her views and never broke the confidences she received. In spite of her uncompromising attitude she was not easily shocked: the crofters in Olkkala and the women at the hostel had taught her what life could be.

I did not like school, although this did not cause difficulties. Leif, who was two years to the day younger than me, found things harder. He was exceedingly sensitive, and if he did something wrong, a stern glance would bring him to repentance and tears. When I got up to mischief, on the other hand, nothing but solid punishment had any effect. Our cat and I used to be put into

a dark cupboard to atone for our trespasses: the cat mostly for climbing the lace curtains in the sitting room. Perhaps I learnt something; the cat, however, only grew wilder and eventually had to be given away.

Leif loved literature and poetry. He suffered from many physical and emotional troubles. I only understood much later how he began to feel a failure, as his self-confidence received one blow after the other.

Finland felt part of the Nordic bloc of countries. But nationalistic feelings were strong and this sometimes led to violent fights between the Finnish-speaking majority and the Swedish-speaking minority, and between those who attended Finnish-medium and Swedish-medium schools. An older boy once hit me hard on the mouth without warning when I innocently answered his question about which school I went to.

Meanwhile, anti-Russian sentiments continued to grow – and so did the voluntary Home Guard. The prevailing uneasiness occasionally led to extremes. Some extremists accused a former Finnish president of being too liberal toward the Russians and kidnapped him with the aim of sending him across the eastern border into Russia.

This aversion increased as we learnt more about the reign of terror taking place in the Soviet Union. Most people in Finland, children as well as grown ups, knew as early as the 1930s about the persecutions, prison camps and mass executions. No one wanted to learn Russian in school, and most schools did not even offer the subject.

We occasionally met Americans and Englishmen with an unshakeable belief that equality prevailed in Russia, and that no one was unemployed. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, many Finnish-Americans emigrated to the Soviet Union. Most of them became victims of Stalin's terror. Hardly anyone in Finland, socialist or non-socialist alike, considered this option when the economic crisis hit us.

When I was nearly eight, Father came home one day and told

us that he had been sacked. For some years he was unemployed. He used to sit silently at the dinner table, his unhappy eyes expressing his feelings. It was deeply humiliating to be no good for anything at the age of 35. It was also difficult for him to tell my mother what he felt: he could not get out of his shell. Leif and I found it hard to get really close to him.

Unemployment was even worse in Germany than in our country. So when Hitler made the wheels go round again, many in Europe began to look at him with new eyes. Even Churchill on one occasion suggested that Hitler might be the man who could bring the Germanic people back to their former greatness. Because of the threat from Stalin, many Finns regarded Germany's rearming as indirect life insurance for Finland. Finland had a tradition of cooperation with Germany which stretched back for several centuries. Most professors and scientists had received their postgraduate training at German universities. Education, the church and the army were all built on German models.

While the attitude of the Nazis to Jews instilled apprehensions, many suggested that the stories were exaggerated. Not all, however – the family of my aunt, Wanda Bolte, helped hundreds of Jews to find places of refuge, initially in Finland. And my father was convinced that Germany had embarked on a deadly, dangerous road. He sometimes ran into conflict with those who maintained that he was not realistic about the Bolshevik threat to Europe.

In our school, the dividing line was drawn on a different level. I, along with half of the boys, asserted that the English fighter planes were superior while the others backed the German airforce.

In the spring of 1939 I passed my university entrance exams and took a summer job in a metal firm to get some training and earn a little money. Later that summer all the family gathered for a silver wedding in the Boltes' summer house on the beautiful Lohja lake. A fiddler led a festive procession through gates decorated

with garlands. As our laughter and singing echoed over the bay, my uncle was called to the telephone. He returned with the news that World War II had started.

Our worst forebodings were soon realized. The Soviet Union behaved ever more menacingly toward Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and on the last day of November, attacked Finland along our whole eastern border without any declaration of war. In spite of the deep wounds left by the War of Independence, and in spite of the Communist Party being banned in Finland, an extraordinary thing happened. For the first time since independence the Finnish nation stood united. Whites and Reds, Communists and German sympathisers marched out together to prevent Stalin from fulfilling his intentions.

5. Stalin strikes

It was nine o'clock on the morning of 30 November 1939. I had just left home to go to a lecture when I heard the buzzing of engines above Helsinki. A few moments later a series of explosions roared in the centre of the city. I rushed into a gateway for protection. Then the alarm signals started to scream.

It had been a nerve-racking autumn. Until the last moment the whole nation had hoped that Finnish negotiators in Moscow would be able to find a peaceful solution. This was the result. "It is war now," I said to myself. "But imagine what the world will say when we beat the Russians! I must join up." The response was that of a starry-eyed eighteen-year-old but perhaps it was an inner defence mechanism. I hurried home, where I received a phone call to tell me that our unit of the Home Guard would gather that afternoon.

I had been receiving basic military training in the evenings and at weekends since I joined the Home Guard a few months earlier. My cousin Olof af Hällström and I had landed up in an infantry platoon belonging to the Old Boys' batallion - somewhat inappropriately, considering our age. During the autumn we had often been ordered to guard strategically important bridges. Now the war was a reality. A couple of hours after the air attack I put on my uniform and said goodbye to Mother, Father and Leif. Mother tucked a Bible-reading programme into my rucksack before I left. I could never have imagined that it would be five

years before I took off my uniform.

That evening our platoon was sent to a suburb. The next morning we saw action, firing at low-flying Russian planes. To our great satisfaction one aircraft crashed to the ground. We rushed forward. The pilot had caught a bullet in his forehead. It was the first time I saw a dead enemy. True enough, we were informed that it was unlikely to have been one of our bullets that had downed the plane. But this did not dampen our patriotic feelings.

A little later I was sent as an orderly to the Ministry of Defence, which had taken up quarters in five long caves outside Helsinki. All day I answered the phone, "81030". I gave information about air attacks, ran around with messages, brought schnapps to the Minister of Defence at night and carried away his chamber pot. A few times President Kyösti Kallio visited the Minister and the generals working with him. I noticed Kallio's serious, sad eyes.

After a few weeks I became impatient with life in the Ministry and wanted to be out in the real war. I was not due to be called up for regular military service for a couple of years. So I decided to volunteer. But it wasn't that simple. I was tall, but underweight. I knew, however, that for the military medical inspection you only took off your shirt and shoes. So I ate as much porridge as I could get down, drank one litre of water, and hid keys and metal in my trousers. The scale just passed the critical limit. So I became a recruit in the light field artillery centre on the West Coast.

The Finnish army was ill-equipped. There were not enough uniforms for all the recruits. We looked more like a band of robbers. A cockade and a broad yellow leather belt were the only formal uniform required. Some put the yellow belt around an ordinary black winter coat and the cockade on their hat or cap.

We were put up in an elementary school. Sixty recruits slept on three-tier planks in a classroom for twenty pupils. The air could be indescribable. On the top bunk you sweated and on the floor the temperature sometimes sank below zero. Here we now learned the basics of Finnish army discipline. We started out with infantry training, but then were trained as gunners – without see-

ing a single artillery gun, because all the guns had been despatched to the East Front. Even old guns from the 1870 war had been taken from the museums. We had to be content with heavy logs mounted on a pair of wheels and equipped with directional instruments.

We listened to the radio news from the front. The situation seemed more and more dismal as the battle on the Karelian isthmus approached its final phase. We hoped for the unexpected – would the Western powers come to our help after all? One day we were told that our artillery training was at an end – we were needed as infantrymen at the bay of Viborg, where the Russians had begun to advance over the ice in order to outflank the Finnish front.

We never got there. A few days later, on 13 March, we were all called into the corridor. The radio was switched on and we heard a solemn voice reading Mannerheim's announcement that an armistice had been concluded. The main part of the Karelian isthmus including Viborg, Finland's second largest city, large parts of Northeast Finland and all of the Hanko peninsula in the Southwest had been surrendered to the Soviet Union. None of us uttered a word. Mannerheim noted bitterly that Sweden had refused to allow a French-British expeditionary corps to use Swedish territory for transit to Finland.

Despair gripped us all. Some eyes filled with tears. We feared that this was the first stage of the final annihilation of our independence. Seven hundred thousand Soviet soldiers had been killed or wounded, but their resources seemed inexhaustible. To go on fighting would have meant suicide for us: Soviet Marshall Konyev tells in his memoirs that at the beginning of the Winter War Stalin had planned to move the whole Finnish population to Siberia.

The war had united the whole nation. Fifty years later I met an editor from Moscow who had recently participated in a civil defence course, where the Soviet wartime propaganda offensive against Finland had been cited as an example of "a totally failed and inappropriate campaign". In a sense one could say that the Winter War was Finland's true liberation war.

Some years later I learnt that only ten days after the armistice our president had predicted that war would break out again. In his memoirs Mannerheim tells how the road forward for our country began to crystallize. For Finland to stand alone, without any allies, would have been a direct invitation to Russian or German occupation, with fatal consequences in either case. The old idea of a Nordic defence union had long lived in Mannerheim's mind. But before April 1940 few Norwegians saw any immediate danger, and Sweden was so concerned about its neutrality that the mere thought of a union instilled deep fear. In the prevailing situation the worst of all alternatives would have been to do nothing and remain alone.

After the armistice, Russia's presence in Finland was increasingly noticeable. The Soviets were not slow to use every chance to increase their power and harass our authorities. The pact between the Soviet Union and Germany was still in force and up until now Hitler had given Stalin his full support in attacking Finland. After the War of Independence young Finland had possessed few living links with the countries of the West and, to Mannerheim's concern, subsequent governments had done little to establish them. Now the Western powers were fully occupied elsewhere. There was little doubt about the final intentions of the Russians: they were simply waiting for their chance.

Immediately after the end of the Winter War, I was sent to a school for non-commissioned officers. When spring came, our whole course was dispatched to dig trenches on the new south-east border. The food was insufficient and worse than during the war. During our spare time we tried to buy milk from the farms. Month after month our unit continued its monotonous work without knowing much about what was happening in the wider world.

Behind the scenes, relations between the Russians and the Germans were getting worse. The Russian airforce shot down the regular Finnish passenger plane between Tallinn and Helsinki to prevent courier bags from falling into the hands of the Germans. The Germans were now showing increasing interest in Finland.

This had little to do with concern for the Finnish people.

Stalin's failure to annex Finland once and for all during the Winter War had humiliated him before the world. He had to think of some other way. We heard that his Foreign Minister, Molotov, had told the Lithuanian Prime Minister: "You have to understand that small nations must disappear. Your Lithuania together with the other Baltic states, Finland included, will have to join the honourable family of the Soviet Union."

In November 1940, Hitler and Molotov met in Berlin. By then, the other Baltic countries had been occupied and Molotov asked Hitler to give him a free hand for a final showdown with Finland. Hitler refused. He did not want to risk the export of metal and timber from Finland: the best nickel deposits in Europe were situated in Petsamo on our Arctic Sea coast. From a strategic point of view the question was now whether the Soviet Union or Germany was going to fill the vacuum that Finland presented.

Earlier that year the Germans had conquered Narvik in Norway. This secured Germany's steel supply from Sweden for the rest of the war and freed its back so that it could pursue its plans towards the East.

Finland was caught between two poles, cut off from other potential allies. If we had opposed the German effort to establish a presence in Finland, they might have marched into Finland anyway to forestall the Russians. In a sense the interests of Germany and Finland coincided. We concluded that Finland had no other choice than cooperation with the Germans.

In the spring of 1941 I was sent to the reserve officer school. The pessimism in the country was beginning to give way. Many of the leaders in the officer school began to show sympathy for the Germans. If Germany broke with the Soviet Union, this might help us in our desperate situation.

Soon events were rolling forward.

6. Ill-matched allies

One day in June 1941 word reached us that the Germans had attacked the Soviet Union. The same day the Russian airforce bombed Finland. On 26 June, the President announced that we were at war. Finland and Germany were now comrades-in arms but this did not entail enmity towards the Western allies, we were told.

Although there were strong pro-German circles in Finland, Germany to most people was only an ally because of our common enemy. Few saw Nazism as something to strive for, but most people wanted a chance to regain the territory we had lost in the Winter War.

It was depressing to think of the German occupation of our brother country Norway, but our own situation was so precarious that other considerations had to yield. We hoped that the Norwegians would understand, but perhaps this was not easy for them. The Germans dispatched a couple of divisions from northern Norway to northern Finland.

In the officer school enthusiasm was high. The general belief was that the war would soon be over, as Finland had already managed to hold its own against the Soviet army for three and a half months.

The new outbreak of war cut short our course. Immediately after our final examinations we were put into goods wagons en route for different sectors of the front. I first landed up in the city

of Oulu in the northwest, where we were placed in alphabetical order. Everyone from G to H was ordered to join the 6th division, north of the Arctic circle. I had always dreamt of going to Lapland. "Imagine, now it's becoming a reality," I wrote home, "and to crown it all the state is paying for the trip!"

Our wagons stopped where the railway ended, and I spotted a reindeer trotting leisurely by. But, alas, the charm did not last very long.

The 6th division consisted mainly of forest people, professional hunters and farmers from northern Finland. Most reserve officers were foresters by profession. Both officers and men were individualists, brought up to cope on their own. When our division was merged with the 169th German division the marriage was doomed to be full of frictions. It felt strange to be given the German Generaloberst Falkenhorst as our army corps commander: we were now under German supreme command. Later in the war Germans and Finns were put in completely different sectors of the front and contact was handled by liaison officers. The only thing the Finnish soldiers missed were the tins of delicious pork supplied to German soldiers.

From the railhead, the journey continued on a truck for some 100 kilometres eastward to the division staff in Salla. The next stage was to reach the 14th artillery regiment and the final goal its 2nd battery, far off in the wilderness. I was ordered to take the straightest route through the forests with the help of my compass.

When I finally arrived after some 25 kilometres' walk, crossing rivers, swamps and mountains, the battery had just been ordered to break up camp. An advance guard of strong men with axes and saws cleared a narrow forest road, along which the horses could pull the four three-inch-calibre Norwegian guns. Sometimes we loaded the whole battery onto rafts pulled by small motorboats along the long watercourses.

The chief goal for the army corps was to reach the White Sea at the little town of Kandalax and to cut off the vital Murmansk railway, on which military supplies delivered by the English and

American convoys were transported into Russia. The Russians had deployed many divisions to stop our advance against the railway, and had fortified the main road and the railway from the Finnish border eastward so strongly that it was unthinkable to advance along them. So we concentrated on a pincer movement. Our Lapland division had been given the task of cutting off the main Russian force from the south and reaching the road and railway behind the lines. An Austrian-German unit was ordered to press on from the north.

After a tactical retreat the Russian resistance gradually hardened. Our whole division now prepared itself for a major thrust.

Our battery had taken up position on a forested hill. The artillery fire on both sides intensified day by day. The Russians soon located our battery, and fired on us uninterruptedly with shells which exploded as soon as they touched the crowns of the trees. Between our own rounds of shelling, we kept having to take cover. But we could not stop firing for a moment, or we would expose our infantry which was now fully committed to the attack.

We soon learned how close a shell could detonate. Once a heavy grenade hit the trunk of a fir tree, behind which I was hiding, a couple of metres above me. The top half of the tree fell down beside me. But the shell did not explode until it hit the soft ground further back.

During a slight pause in the firing two of us went into our tent. Suddenly I had a strong feeling that we should leave quickly. "Let's get out!" I shouted. Seconds later a shell hit the empty tent. Only rags remained.

A few kilometres further on, the fire-control unit stormed forward alongside the infantry and conquered a Russian battery. The first fire-control officer, a forester from Lapland, was badly wounded. In the night a message came that I should leave at once to join the fire-control unit. There was no map, and in order not to get lost in the steady downpour, I followed the telephone line along the ground. When I got there a few hours later, things were

slightly calmer. The men of the fire-control group were lying under a tree by the artillery guns they had captured, side by side with dead Russians and horses. This was my first meeting with the men with whom I was to go through thick and thin during the next three years.

Our job was to select the targets which would ensure maximum fire support for the advancing infantry. Lieutenant Rasi was now first fire-control officer. I had just been promoted to lieutenant and became second-in-command. Rasi's family came from Uhtua in Eastern Karelia. He continuously returned to his burning hope that we would one day help liberate his home village.

We did not know that 40,000 Russians would be shut in if our offensive succeeded. It was now 20 August and the nights were already cold. We lay on the ground in the incessant rain, in the oppressive silence of the forest. We were freezing and miserable, and the food was running out.

Then all at once the Russian counter-offensive started,with firing from all sides. Because of the explosive bullets, we did not always know where the shooting was coming from. The Russians pushed forward to within a 100 metres of us. The fire was like a blanket over us as we flattened ourselves against the ground, and so furious that we could not discern the individual shots. The rain poured steadily down.

This continued for fifteen minutes without break, and then eased off for some moments. At that point we heard a series of clicks from miniature mortars. Shells as small as hand-grenades detonated around us. My mouth filled with gun-smoke and clay. For a second Rasi and I lifted ourselves slightly from the ground to see what had happened to our small group. We were shoulder to shoulder and Rasi shouted to the men, "Spread, boys! This is too good a target for the mortars." Then he suddenly screamed, "Satan!" and fell backwards at my side, killed by a bullet through the mouth, blood gushing out. In the war stories I had read as a boy the dying hero spoke moving words about his family and his country. Here was the reality – only a swearword.

I realized that I was now the responsible fire-control officer. I was totally inexperienced and had not yet even learnt the names of all my men. Two got the job of dragging Rasi away. There was no more time to think about him. What should I do now? The answer came instantly, as the fire hurricane broke loose once more. There had been no chance to dig in. We could not move from the spot where we were lying on a layer of soaking wet Russian excrement, at the site of their former battery. I pressed my cheek against the ground to lie as low as possible. Now someone on the left side was hit, then someone on the right. The smell of gun-powder and blood penetrated my nostrils, and a deadly fear gripped me. I prayed as I had never prayed before, "God, I see no chance of getting out of this alive, but if You will, have mercy on us. Let me get home once again. Then I shall be ready to die."

The Russians attacked three times that night. Our small group grew ever smaller. The fire continued for several hours but the Russians did not push forward any more. Protected by the rain and the darkness the bulk of the troops began to pull back to the road.

At dawn we were ordered to re-establish close contact with the enemy. Under heavy firing we penetrated deeper into a mountainous massif with a thick undergrowth of Arctic birch. The Russians were situated further up the mountain slope, and finally we were only 50 metres below them. Behind the mountain was the road and the railway leading from the Finnish border to the White Sea. We had to get the offensive going quickly, so as to cut them off and to surround the enemy.

Our task was to give artillery support to Captain Kiiveri's battalion, which consisted mainly of professional huntsmen and forest workers. The battalion commander shouted a shrill "Onward!". "It's impossible!" yelled one of my men. "Wait a little," pleaded another. I cursed and began to creep forward, as scared as the others. We crept, and jumped a couple of times, but the Russian fire was so violent that no one in the battalion could get any further. Close by me a dying infantry man cried out heart-

breakingly, "Help me, help me!" It was impossible to reach him.

We were now so close to the Russians that the strongest Finns threw hand grenades at them. We tried to take cover behind some big stone blocks to establish radio-contact with the battery, but they provided poor protection. Our radio sergeant had half his head torn off by a shell. Soon the battalion commander had no choice; we were forced to withdraw for a few days.

Protected by the continous fire the main part of the Russian division managed to slink out of the "sack" that had nearly strangled their retreat. The pincer movement had failed. The German wagons, made for open steppes, could not cope with the terrain, and so the Germans did not arrive in time. That was the salvation of the Russians. But they had had to leave behind nearly all their guns, wagons and stores. The battlefield presented a miserable spectacle in the bleak morning.

Half a year later I got my first short leave. "Did anything particular happen last summer around 20 August?" my mother asked me. "What do you mean?" I asked. "Well, a woman from the congregation in Tammisaari, whom I only know slightly, phoned and told me that during the night she had felt a strong compulsion to pray for you. She asked how you were. And I answered that I knew nothing but what the papers said, that a violent battle was raging in Salla in the direction of the White Sea, and that you were there." I told her all that had happened during those days and about my prayer.

We continued to advance rapidly. Corpses and dead horses, blown-up tanks and artillery guns lay everywhere. From a mountain top we saw two Russian locomotives tear up the entire railway track with an enormous iron loop. The rails remained on the bank like two endless, parallel boa constrictors.

We now advanced eastward some twenty kilometres along the road without meeting massive resistance. At the village of Alakurtti the Russians had constructed a strong line of bunkers on both sides of the road. Our battery was ordered to support the Germans' main attack along the road. As I spoke some German,

I was given the task of directing the artillery fire, and with one of my men, I found my way to the German infantry line.

It felt strange to be the only Finn amongst all the Germans. I was struck by the iron discipline which choked any personal initiative. Everything went by the book, and the officers shouted their lengthy orders so loudly that the Russians could not help knowing about the imminent attack.

The Russians were well-prepared. The "élite" German SS regiment thrown in against them was made up of Berlin boys from the plains, who were helpless in the mountainous Arctic wilderness - unlike the Austrian riflemen who also fought in Lapland. Headed by tanks and protected by artillery fire, the Germans began to move forward, but their effort was doomed from the start. The Russian fire was crushing. My comrade and I each dug a coffin-like pit so that we did not need to expose ourselves above ground level. Beside us stood a tank, an anti-aircraft gun, a couple of machine guns, all squeezed together on a little hillock by the roadside – exactly where we had learnt that a fire observation post should not be placed.

In their distressed situation the Germans now asked for support from Stuka dive-bombers to break the deadlock. After half an hour, to our relief, we heard the throbbing of engines and saw a formation of five aircraft approaching. The planes circled a couple of times above us, and then they dived. Unfortunately, the pilots mistook the hill where we were lying for Russian territory. The ground shook as the bombs exploded. A Stuka fired with two machine-guns as it was diving – one jet struck the ground close to my left side and the other to my right. A bomb threw the German tank in an arc through the air. The battalion commander was killed on the spot. The dead and wounded were dragged away. Panic broke out amongst the Germans.

The Russians must have rejoiced. As the first wing of Stukas turned and disappeared, we saw a still larger formation of Stukas approaching, ready to repeat the manoeuvre. The Germans sent an express request to some tanks further back to drag big German flags up the hillock to warn the pilots.

After half a day's battle, the Russians were finally surrounded and tried to flee from their defence line. Some of them stepped forward with their hands up. The Germans were highly agitated. A bit further on, the new German unit commander was standing on the road watching the burning Alakurtti. A soldier came up to him with some Russian prisoners. "Günther!" said the commander brusquely, pointing towards the forest beside the road. Günther forced the prisoners to walk ahead of him in single file, and shot them down from behind one by one. Presumably such things have happened in most armies when the nerves are strained. But this was a cold-blooded order given by the highest commander and of course against the Geneva convention.

It was a relief soon afterwards to be ordered back to my own group and to take part in an attack with Captain Wetterstrand's Finnish border guard battalion. In complete silence we formed a long chain in the wilderness. I stood close to the battalion commander. At twelve o'clock sharp he said calmly, "I guess we should go now," and started to move forward himself. No further instructions were needed. The chain walked in ghostlike silence through the dense forest until we came into close contact with the Russians. Then, of course, the silence was broken.

When the Finnish soldiers captured prisoners, they were often eager to give them cigarettes and food. In certain prison camps, however, prisoners did suffer from lack of food, and many died. Others were sent to work on farms in different parts of the country, and were often treated so well that our own soldiers were jealous. I had relatives who got Russians as farm workers. What happened when the prisoners were sent back to Russia after the war was a different story. Thousands never saw their homes again. Stalin made sure that no bourgeois leaven would permeate the Soviet Union.

It was now September and the lakes were frozen. The Germans were ill-equipped for winter. They found the huge dark forest menacing: every tree might be hiding an enemy. "When the war

is over, I will cut down every tree in my garden," one German said. The Finns felt at home in the forest, and instinctively regarded each tree as a friend and a protection against the enemy.

The Germans still lived in the belief that the war would end within a few weeks. An Austrian sergeant major, a lawyer in civilian life, surprised me by saying, "I think the war may last many years, and I am not at all sure that it will end well."

During a day's pause, the army chaplain arranged a communion service in the forest. Everyone wanted to participate. We stepped forward and knelt before a simple cross of birch to receive the bread and wine. It was like a thanks to God and a plea for help for the continuation. The men's language continued to be as coarse as before, but deep inside no-one was untouched.

We continued to advance east towards the White Sea. It was a solemn moment when we crossed the old Finnish border. We had now reconquered the land that had belonged to Finland. At the end of September the front line began to stabilize. We did not have the strength to continue the offensive, so over the next two years the positions became rather locked and the war developed gradually into trench warfare with long-range patrolling behind the lines, local attacks and defence battles. The front was now deeply within Russian Karelia.

The long trench warfare was strenuous psychologically. There was no sign that the war would end soon. Some were frustrated, but there was no evidence of self pity – nor of fanaticism. The Russians, lying in the trenches opposite, were as cold as we were. They, too, were dreaming of returning home. We often found a worn-out photo of a sweetheart in the pockets of a fallen Russian.

A Finnish and a Russian company were once situated on opposite sides of a frozen brook. The snow was thin on the ground and it was difficult to get water. One of the Russians could speak some Finnish and a conversation over the narrow no-man's land led to an unusual agreement. Both sides could take water from a hole in the ice undisturbed, as long as they did not wear the white snowsuits which the soldiers of both sides always wore in the

winter.

The activity at the front was sporadic, but one always had to be alert. During the day the Russian sharp-shooters were active, and at night we had to have double manning in the trenches. Our men in the fire-observation groups seldom slept more than three hours in a stretch. The continous night watches left us with red and strained eyes. "If Mother knew where her boy was, she would certainly come and take him home," was one of our sayings.

I regularly spent a couple of hours after midnight on observation, and then at five in the morning the battalion headquarters always phoned for a report of the night's events. Now and then we all had to spend all night in the trench, standing motionless in 45°C below freezing. But we were young and tough, and the excitement and adrenaline did their work.

Towards the end of 1941 the British Empire declared war on Finland. Finnish sailors were interned on the Isle of Man in the Irish Sea, in India, in Australia. We were sad about this, but assumed that Britain had no other choice in the face of Soviet pressure. Years later we learned that Churchill had written privately to Mannerheim to say how deeply grieved he was at what he saw coming. He did not want to declare war, but had to do so out of consideration for Stalin. "Boys, we are now at war against gentlemen," one soldier said when he heard the news on the radio, "so be sure you have shaved."

When Sweden pleaded for help for Finland at one point, the US Foreign Secretary Cordell Hull said, "Many quarters in the USA feel sympathy for this small, unblemished country. But Russia is our ally and we cannot permit the great general lines to be upset by helping Finland." Our troops never managed to cut off Russia's rail connection between Murmansk and the interior, though in 1942 the army command prepared a major thrust against the railway. America then threatened to declare war on Finland immediately. The plan was never put into action.

To Hitler's anger, throughout the war Mannerheim refused to participate in an offensive against Leningrad itself. This reflect-

ed the Germans' and Finns' different motives: the Germans were engaged in a campaign against the Soviet Union, while we had gone to war to get our land back.

Many people have since asked whether it was neccessary to push the front so far east. The old Finnish border was strategically impossible to defend, so there was much to be said for using the great eastern waterways as the final frontier of the offensive. But there were also those, particularly younger academics, who dreamt of incorporating the old Russian Finnish-speaking East Karelia into Finland. Finns by and large saw this as an independence war, a continuation of the Winter War.

During the summer of 1941 my attitude to life had changed. I had "got the hang of" the war: fortunately I had no idea how long it was going to go on. I had learnt to live one day at a time, to be happy about small things in the midst of all the hardships and to value a comradeship that had undergone the acid test.

7. Horses and men

Our battery had four horse-drawn guns, each usually pulled by four horses. In addition there were the horses for the service corps and a couple of riding horses. Nearly all our men came from the country and had spent their lives with horses. They understood them and treated them as their good friends.

Every farm in Finland had to loan most of its best horses to the army and was usually never paid back. The horses had a hard time, particularly when it came to fodder. In the winter, when we ran out of hay, we tore thick sheets of raw cellulose into pieces and mixed them into a gray sludge with water. We tried to stretch these rations by adding water-soaked newspapers. When the horses were tethered to trees it was not long before they had gnawed all the bark off. The horses mostly stayed outdoors, even when the thermometer sank below - 40°C. But nature had its own remedy: the horses' short glossy hair grew to a thick, shaggy fur.

Once we had to drag the artillery guns some twenty kilometres through trackless forests, swamps and mountains up onto a mountain top for a decisive thrust against the Russian railway. A team of strong men walked ahead and cleared a way through the trees with their axes and saws.

When we reached the mountain slope, further advance seemed hopeless. Four strong horses per gun were getting nowhere. Six got the gun a little way up the long, steep slope. The men con-

nected eight horses to one light artillery gun, and even that did not seem to work. We could not be late. While a group of men pushed from the back, eight men placed themselves by the side of the horses and began to whip them with all their strength with small birch-trees. It was a heart-breaking sight. The eyes of the horses were wide with terror and they were frothing at the mouth. The boys seemed to suffer nearly as much from what they were forced to do.

We got the gun up. When the horses were unharnessed they collapsed on their sides on the ground, gasping with exhaustion. One horse died of heart failure.

We had to repeat the same manoeuvre three times until all the guns were up the mountain. The men now prepared the firing positions while the fire-observation group hurried forward to the infantry lines. When the dense fog lifted it became clear that the battery was situated on a very exposed spot. As soon as our firing got going, the Russians located our positions and began to hammer us with their artillery. The rocky terrain gave no protection. The horses neighed in despair. The men tried to push them over so that they would not be hit. Soon too many of our horses were lying dead on the mountain.

Ironically the Finns soon afterwards got a whole squad of horses as war booty.

My aunt Sointu had a small farm close to Olkkala. Life had dealt her many tragedies and disappointments. Her farm horses and German Shepherd dogs were among her best friends. She put up a big sign on the main road passing her farm, with a quotation which she attributed to Charles the Great: "The better I get to know people, the more I appreciate dogs." Underneath, another sign said: "Beware of the dog!"

Sointu sent many horses to the front. Some months after the war ended she got the news that one of her mares was on a goods wagon that had arrived in Vihti. Sointu was then living alone on the farm with her young son, an old farmworker whose only spiritual food was a dream interpretation book and a pious house-

keeper whose literary nourishment consisted of the Bible verses in the obituary notices in newspapers. These were in plentiful supply at that time.

This little group was standing in the farmyard as the mare was led through the gate. She had been away for over three years. She walked straight up to my aunt and nuzzled her cheek and hand. Sointu was convinced that the horse was weeping, as they all were. After a while the horse took herself off to the farmhouse, circled it slowly, and then proceeded to sniff at all the outhouses. Finally she went through the open stable door into her own stall, and stayed there.

When the lines were not moving and trench warfare took over, we built a *korsu* to live in. It was a blockhouse dug into the ground, with a roof made of three or four layers of logs and covered by heavy stones and earth, so as to withstand, at least, a direct hit by a middle-sized artillery shell. A metal net over the chimney prevented Russian commandos from throwing hand grenades in during the night. A little daylight peeped in through an oblique hole. The closer the *korsu* was to the first line of trenches, the lower and more invisible its roof had to be. A short zigzag ditch led to the frontline trench.

During the bitingly cold winter of 1943 we were entrenched for nearly four months by the frozen Salmijoki river which leads to Lake Onega in the south. A swamp separated us from the Russians. We could not stand upright in the *korsu* as it had not been possible to dig very deep. The floor was usually covered by water and we had to use stones and boxes as stepping stones to reach our berths. A dozen men lived in a three-by-five metre room.

The terrain was unprotected and, although it was a so-called more peaceful period, the Russian sharpshooters caused a lot of trouble with their telescopic-sight rifles. My fellow officer was hit in the shoulder, and that was the end of the war for him. We received strict orders from regimental headquarters that all sentries must wear their helmets in the trenches. But our fire-obser-

vation watchmen found it hard to hear alien sounds when the wind was whistling in their helmets and so they took them off when things seemed calm.

One day a colonel came to inspect the frontline trenches. As I followed his group out of the *korsu*, to creep along the 30-metre ditch to the observation post, I whispered to the sergeant: "Phone the observer immediately about his helmet." When we reached the post, the colonel said, "It is excellent that the private has his helmet on." "Yes, Colonel, I got an order to put it on pretty damned quick." The colonel gave me a searching look.

As Christmas approached, the army gave priority for leave to those with families. So a group of us bachelors celebrated Christmas together in our *korsu* in Salmijoki. In spite of everything, we were filled with expectancy. Of their own accord, the men cleaned the *korsu* thoroughly, hung a Christmas tree in the roof as the floor was underwater, spread newspapers on the table and placed candles on it, sent from home.

In the middle of the day when it was still light, the army chaplain brought us each a book of carols. We all listened devoutly to the Christmas reading from the Bible, and in the evening we unwrapped our parcels from home and shared the delicacies they contained. Even the army for once offered some good food and a decilitre of schnapps.

In the afternoon a Finnish-speaking Russian political officer, a so-called politruk, exhorted us through his megaphone to surrender to the "victorious Soviet army" and no longer allow ourselves to be exploited by Mannerheim's politics. "Come to us, we have bread here!" he shouted. One of our men made a megaphone out of cardboard and replied with our full Christmas menu. The dialogue ended with a harmless machine-gun volley from both sides.

Inside the *korsu* we took each other by the hand and wished each other happy Christmas. A little embarrassed, one of the men asked, "Could the lieutenant read a bit perhaps?" I read a Christmas story from the sheet the chaplain had given us. Then

another fellow suggested we should sing together. "Which song would you like most?" I asked. "Well, we could perhaps start with the first and go on." We sang our way reverently through the book from the first verse of the first carol to the last verse of the last. Outdoors there was no moonlight and we had to have a reinforced watch in the trenches. When a watchman came in, he took off his snowsuit, sat down and joined the singing while another put on his suit, seized his rifle and went out.

Never, before or since, have I experienced such an atmosphere. At midnight I went on my usual inspection round the trenches. Far away on the left I heard two shots with a second's interval, followed by three quick shots. The same series was repeated again and again, coming closer all the time. When it reached our sector, one of our soldiers fired off the same series. Then it continued to the right until the sound finally died away in the far distance. This was our internal Christmas greeting in our own division. It was quiet on the Russian side, and our American Bethlehem Steel artillery guns kept silent. One of the men wondered how many of those in the trenches opposite were thinking of a Christmas in the original Bethlehem.

In our battery we were all of approximately the same age. Most had been drafted at the age of nineteen and were farmers' sons and forest workers from northwest Finland and Lapland, slow, calm men. Few were married yet. In this rather homogeneous group, the spirit was surprisingly good, although there were problems with discipline in some parts of the army, as there seemed to be no end to the war. Everybody grumbled about the food, which was often so bad that English and German soldiers would have gone on strike if they had been forced to eat it.

There were eccentrics in every unit, but they were usually protected, rather than harassed, by their comrades. One of the men in the battery service group was not very bright. It was something of a mystery how he had ever been approved for war service, but he could handle a horse. After one year, he got his first leave, which meant a two days' railway journey home, two days there

and two days' journey back. He missed his home station – and then he missed it again coming back, with the result that he had only two hours at home.

After this, a man who came from the same county asked if their next leaves could be at the same time, so that he could help his friend get home. When the time came, the horse handler came to us triumphantly and said, "What incredible luck! Haapakoski has got leave at exactly the same time as me, so we can travel together!" The men knew that if the horse handler's case was taken up by the doctors, he would be sent home. But they also knew what the women there would think of him, and wanted to save his honour. If he returned home half crazy after the war, you could always blame the war.

None of the men were outwardly particularly pious, and none expressed their innermost thoughts. But they seldom, if ever, ridiculed the Christian faith: their heritage from home was present all the time. One of the horse handlers, however, was very religious. Each evening he read from his Bible, while the others mainly played cards. If someone happened to swear while the horse handler was reading, another would bellow out in the semi-darkness, "Don't swear while he's reading the Bible!"

Riikonen was one of the slightly older ones in our battery, a kind-hearted and good-tempered man from the shores of Ladoga. One day he came to the battery commander, Askal Vikman, and me in the officers' tent. "I have just received an invitation to a wedding," he said slowly. "Yes, we suppose you want leave, but of course that depends on the circumstances," we answered. Riikonen handed us a beautifully printed card. "It's for my own wedding," he said. "Well, of course in that case you can have some extra days," we said. "Yes, but I have never proposed and we have never talked about marriage. And I don't even know if I want to marry the girl. She's certainly eager. I wonder what I should do." We agreed that he could travel to Sortavala on Lake Ladoga, where the girl lived. "In spite of the invitation card, Riikonen, you must feel free to cancel it if you feel uncertain," we added.

A week later Riikonen returned to the front, and came into the tent to report, smiling genially. "How did it go?" I asked. "The wedding took place. You see, when I arrived in Sortavala there was already a fine brass plate on the door with the name Riikonen engraved. And then the girl gave me a beautiful accordion as a present. So I thought it was perhaps best to get married."

In our fire-observation group there was a country lad called Nevala from the west coast. He liked to fool about but was sharper than many. In the early part of the war, when we got our food supply from the German depot, a few decilitres of sour red wine were sometimes included. It tasted bad and was not enough to make anyone happy, so the men once decided that they would each give their share to Nevala. He got drunk, and as thanks he walked around on his hands inside the tent, singing. Everyone was satisfied.

When we needed nails and other materials for building our *korsus* and fortifications, we were told that there were none to be had. No one believed this, because a lot of construction work was going on in the division headquarters. There was an ongoing tug-of-war between the needs of the front and the staff headquarters. Nevala asked for permission to make a "tour of reconnaisance", and set off with a horse and a sledge. When he reached the division headquarters, he found a construction site, with nails and other fine materials. He chatted innocently with those he met and returned to the front line with all the building materials we needed, to cheers from all his comrades.

8. The collapse

In 1942 I had been admitted to the Technical University and I was keen to get on with my studies in spite of the war. The only thing I could do on my own was to study such theoretical subjects as mathematics, often at night by candlelight in the *korsu*. Finally, in February 1944, I managed to get two days' leave for an exam. I felt liberated: everything was not standing still after all.

As the train was approaching Helsinki railway station after a two days' journey, all the alarm bells started to scream. The train stopped and the passengers rushed out and flattened themselves against the railway embankment. Bombs detonated all over the city. A station building burst into flames. It was the biggest air raid the capital had ever experienced, involving many hundreds of bombers.

When the attack was finally over, and the train could drive into the smoking station, it was two o'clock in the morning. Fire engines rushed around with their sirens screaming. I walked home on a carpet of broken glass. The six-floor house next door to ours had sustained a direct hit and its whole facade had collapsed. The street was littered with bath-tubs, furniture and pianos. Our house had a great many broken windows. I ran as fast as I could up to our apartment on the third floor – no-one at home, then downstairs to the cellar. There I found my father and mother sitting in a corner, with an open Bible beside them. It was a strange reunion.

There was a rumour that the Technical University had been bombed. I clung to the slender hope that I might be able to meet the professor before returning to the front, but the chances were slim as the city was being evacuated once again. When I got to the university the next morning, only the walls remained standing. Smoke rose from the ruins of what once had been the laboratory. My leave was over and that evening I was back on the train heading east.

Two days later I was back with my comrades, but my thoughts remained with my parents in the capital. We soon had news of two more large air raids with up to 900 planes attacking. Altogether the Russians dropped 20,000 bombs on Helsinki. Only the highly effective anti-aircraft defence managed to save the city from being levelled to the ground.

The weeks and months did not differ much from each other during the long trench warfare. Short night-time raids, attempts to take prisoners, ever-continuing night watches and an eternal waiting for leave were all part of the routine. Soon the new war had been going on for three years. No glimmer of an end seemed in sight. Had we had a better overall picture we would have known that the final countdown was in full swing.

In the early spring of 1944 the German front in East Europe gave way, and we at the front began to notice that something was happening. Russian activity in our sector grew livelier. By the time full spring had come, our battery had taken up position at the notorious Stalin Canal, which connects Lake Onega with the White Sea. Four hundred thousand prisoners had died building the canal. Many of the prison camps were still there, with their palisades made of logs, sharpened at the top and crowned with barbed wire. Watch-towers rose in the corners. In my mind's eye I could see all those thousands, digging the canal and dragging themselves forward, men like myself but without hope.

Our first line of trenches was only a couple of metres from the canal wall. The Russians had blown up all the locks, and only a little water flowed at the bottom of the canal. Our fire-observa-

tion post was a small bulge on the trench, covered by camouflaged logs. We made our observations through a narrow opening under the logs. A zigzag ditch led to our *korsu* twenty metres further back.

It was a quiet, heavy, hot day. The sun broiled from a blue sky. Inside the *korsu* the alarm string made a tin can shake violently. I grabbed my gun and rushed to the observation post. Nevala, who had the watch, was agitated in his calm way and asked me to look as far as possible to the right. There in the clearest sunlight the Russians came climbing noiselessly up the steep canal wall towards our trenches. It was impossible for the infantry to see them as our trench was just above the canal wall. Nevala, however, could just see them from the side, and had remained alert in spite of the temptation to sit back and enjoy the sun.

The Russians had evidently hidden during the night in the ruins of a blown-up concrete lock. I immediately alerted the battalion commander who was astonished as everything was totally silent. As artillery fire was impossible because of the short range and we were situated in the only place where you could survey a small part of the slope, I asked permission to shoot with his mortars. At lightning speed we gave the position, which was dangerously close to our infantry line. After just a few short corrections, we managed to deliver one direct hit after the other. The fire took the Russians by surprise, and confusion and panic broke out amongst them.

After a long while the Russians sent a sanitary group to carry away the dead and wounded. We still had the shooting positions clear and I commanded a new round of ammunition. Stretchers and stretcher-bearers disappeared in the smoke. The sight engraved itself on my memory, and I was plagued by it for many years. But I believe I would have done the same if I had landed in a similar situation another time.

Presumably the Russians wondered how we had discovered their operation. Maybe they had noticed our observation post, the bulge further up the canal at the very edge of the precipice. Before long they had dragged forward an artillery gun which

nearly demolished our post. Nevala and I just escaped, pressed against the bottom of the pit. We finally crept out, covered by sand.

The episode was one of many indications that the Russians now wanted to test the strength of the Finnish lines. They knew that the Finns would soon be forced to give up the East Karelian front.

We were now ordered to move on to Povenets, a small bombed-out harbour town on the north-eastern corner of Lake Onega. It was the most easterly outpost of the Karelian front. We chose the ruined police station as our fire-observation post, looking out on the harbour with all the sunken ships. But we did not stay there long.

Four hundred kilometres further south on the Karelian isthmus, the Russians had launched their main offensive, throwing 31 divisions, 660 tanks and 1,500 planes into the battle. They had already broken through in many places. We had probably never in the last five years been closer to losing the whole country. The whole Lapland division was ordered on a forced march to the isthmus.

During the night I received an order to leave the observation post in Povenets as unobtrusively as possible at five o'clock the next morning. Collapsed trenches on an open field do not provide much protection, and soon our small group was under short-range artillery fire. One by one we crept out, running, and finally reached the main battery, worn out. We joined the column headed for Karhumäki and Petrozavodsk, the capital of East Karelia. Those of us who could not fit in the trains went on by foot. It was the longest one-day march of my life, nearly 70 kilometres.

After some days' marching it was our turn to be packed into a goods train. The plan was that we should first have a few days' breather when we reached our destination. But things were so desperate that we were ordered to take up our new positions immediately. Mannerheim writes in his memoirs that the Russian artillery fire during this breakthrough effort was heavier than on

Stalingrad. Up to 400 Russian artillery guns could be in simultaneous action per kilometre of the attacking front. We faced six times our numbers. One Finnish regiment sometimes stood against three attacking divisions. A thousand low-flying aircraft incessantly gunned our positions.

As we reached Imatra railway station, we could hear a heavy, uninterrupted rumble ahead. The atmosphere was ominous. No one doubted the defeat of Germany, but what was going to happen to us? The British Empire was at war with us, as well as the Russians, and America had broken diplomatic connections. In some units on the isthmus panic had broken out and some soldiers had fled westwards. In the forest we ran into stray cows abandoned by civilians who had fled the oncoming Russians.

Our fire-observation group hurried to the front line in the village of Ihantala – and there my fate was decided. In the midst of the turmoil and detonating shells a military vehicle crashed against my left arm, crushing two bones. The lower part of the forearm placed itself in an angle, attached only by the skin. The pain was almost unbearable. I looked at my comrades, all young boys like me. Perhaps I should have felt relieved, but instead I was overcome by a strong feeling of disloyalty. For years we had gone through thick and thin together. I had to come back soon!

While I was being taken to the first aid station, my deputy, a young lieutenant, was ordered to continue with the men to the Finnish infantry line. When they got to the place where it should have been, it was no longer there. They had walked straight into a trap and were encircled by the Russians. Within a few minutes the lieutenant was dead. My reckless young orderly, Olli Ruikka from Lapland, was also killed. It affected me deeply. Later our men found one of my fellow officers sitting apathetically on a stone, unable to take the pressure any more. He died a few years later in a mental hospital.

When, several months later, I met our battery commander, Askal Vikman, he said that my injury had surely been my last chance of coming out of the war alive.

From the first aid station I travelled in stages to the military hospital in Pori on the West Coast. It felt unreal to be lying in the big ward, watching the young nurses in their white and blue dresses. I kept thinking about my comrades - how were they coping? The giant Russian offensive continued undiminished. Our anti-tank guns made no impact on their big Voroshilov and Joseph Stalin tanks.

The Russians' final aim was Finland's incorporation into the Soviet Union. If we could not stop them now, they would soon hoist their red flag in Helsinki. Only the Germans had the weaponry, and the food, that we needed; but their condition was that Finland should not make a separate armistice with the Soviet Union.

The Finnish leadership knew that if we did not get out of the war speedily, we were signing our own death warrant. But if we had tried to get an armistice with the Soviet Union earlier on, the Germans and Russians might simply have fought it out on Finnish soil. And we had no chance of negotiating an armistice while the front was rolling onwards.

Faced with an apparently insoluble problem, President Ryti made the most difficult decision of his life and accepted Germany's demands in his own name as President of Finland. He promised that neither he, nor any government appointed by him, would enter into a separate agreement with Moscow. On the strength of this, the Germans gave us new anti-tank weapons, ships with grain were allowed into our ports and the Finnish army at last managed to stop the Russian offensive. Our losses were massive, but the Russians' many times higher.

Reinforcements were already on their way to the Russian forces, when, as so often before in our history, world events intervened. In the scramble to be the first of the allies to reach Berlin, the Soviet Union diverted its troops to Central Europe. Finland could be dealt with later. Stalin modified his earlier condition of total incorporation into the Soviet Union.

In the breathing space which followed, intensive negotiations took place. On 3 September 1944, President Ryti resigned, leav-

ing the new government free to enter into an armistice with Russia and detach Finland from its bond with Germany. Hitler was furious.

The Soviet conditions were merciless, but to continue the war would have meant total occupation. One of the conditions was to drive the Germans out of the country within two months, while demobilizing the Finnish army. If we did not meet this timetable, the Soviet army would intervene – and we knew that once they entered the country, they would never withdraw. So on the same day as the armistice came into effect, the Finnish-German war began.

I soon learnt that my own battery was on its way back to Lapland where we had started our adventure more than three years before. The war against the Germans was initially rather lame. The Germans retreated and the Finns advanced. No one wanted further losses. But then new German SS forces arrived from Norway, and the war became bitterly serious. The Germans followed a scorched earth policy, turning Rovaniemi, the capital of Lapland, into a heap of ruins. Finally our army drove the Germans across the border to Norway, and Germany capitulated in the spring of 1945.

Even in the military hospital we got a feel of the war. The Germans had an airport in Pori and many hospital barracks. Late one evening an order came that all the patients should be placed in the hospital's central corridors. Immediately afterwards the hospital was shaken by a series of explosions: the Germans had ignited all their hospital buildings and blown up the airport. It was their last revenge before leaving.

Some of the nurses came from the largely Finnish-speaking Ingria, a Russian county close to Leningrad. One night they fled over the Bothnian gulf to Sweden to avoid deportation to the Soviet Union.

Finland was in a strange situation. We were engaged in a full war against Germany, and had signed an armistice with the Soviet Union. But we were still formally at war with both the

Soviet Union and the whole British Empire. This was the situation when I, wounds dressed and arm in plaster, was allowed to travel home for Christmas.

More than 40 years later I read in an encyclopedia in New Zealand that Finland had experienced 42 wars and lost nearly all of them. I don't know how correct this information is. But now after all these wars we had our freedom intact, although badly chipped at the edges. Nearly 100,000 had fallen, amongst them many of my relatives and close friends. Four hundred fifty thousand civilians had had to leave their homes and flee west.

Strangely enough there was a certain spirit of optimism in the country; there was no feeling that the war had been in vain. With a certain pride we noted that only three capitals in combatant Europe had never been occupied: London, Moscow and Helsinki.

In the 1960s when radical winds swept over Europe, young academics often regarded the veterans of World War II as pariahs. But by the 1980s new winds were blowing. In 1990 an international survey found that 50 per cent of Europe's young people were willing to give their lives for their country if necessary. Finland was an exception. There the figure was 90 per cent.

9. The dinner jacket

There were no lazy students in the chemistry department of the Technical University immediately after World War II. We knew that if the Soviet Union and the Communists took power, it would mean another indefinite break in our studies. This was a real danger. So we had to press on.

At seven o'clock in the morning darkness and biting winter cold we would line up waiting for the janitor to open the laboratory door, so that we could claim some of the scarce laboratory equipment for the day. At eight in the evening, the janitor often had to throw us out.

My injured arm made the practical work awkward. After two months of studying I had to go back to hospital for some months, because the first operation in the military hospital had failed. A new bone transplant meant that my arm had to be in plaster for another two years. But I conceived the idea of building a shelf for bottles and test tubes on the plaster. In spite of all the difficulties it was an indescribable feeling to be on my way once again, after five-and-a-half years.

Preparing for exams was heavy going at first. My thoughts went in all directions, and after half an hour's reading, I would go to the pantry to find something to chew on. A little later I would go for a walk.

In spite of all the uncertainty and food rationing, we had not lost the ability to enjoy ourselves. A heavy smell of mothballs

filled the university ballroom as we solemnly marched in, clad in tailcoats and long evening gowns which had been stored away for years. We scraped together the money to get an instructor to teach us the old dances, *pas de quatre*, *pas d'Espagne* and the polonaises. We chemists brewed special drinks in the lab for our parties.

As if by silent agreement none of us veterans talked about the war during those first years: something intuitive kept us from dwelling on what we had been through. It was only after ten years that the past started to come up for discussion. Today when veterans sit on the sauna bench, every battle is discussed in detail.

My mother urged me to attend the meetings of the Student Christian Federation. I went along dutifully a couple of times, but could not find their wavelength. I was violently in love with an artist, and did not have enough spare time for religious hobbies. I never consciously rejected or questioned the dimension of faith, but its part in my life grew smaller and smaller. But I still had a bad conscience if I overstepped its moral boundaries. Sometimes I felt envious of my peers who did not seem to be burdened with such irrational inner brakes.

Wherever you went in Helsinki you saw the officers and personnel of the Soviet control commission, who had unlimited access and freedom of operation. They were a constant reminder of Finland's precarious state.

A special court was set up to try the members of the wartime Cabinet for having led the country in a war against the Soviet Union. The sentences were harsh – ten years' hard labour in President Ryti's case – but the alternative would have been trial in Moscow under Soviet Law.

At a decisive stage in the war trials, thousands of students gathered on the terrace around Helsinki's Lutheran Cathedral. From there we could see the Palace of Justice and, as President Ryti and the other "criminals" walked in, we burst into a patriotic song. The Communist mounted police burst in from a side street and, wielding their whips, chased us around the church. Many

students ended up in jail. Decades before, my grandfather had been involved in a similar incident, only then they were chased by Cossacks.

In 1948 a Communist *coup d'état* threatened. The Communist politbureau made plans to jail the President and other leading men. The Minister of the Interior, who had spied for the Soviet Union during the war, was married to Hertta Kuusinen, head of the Communist Party and daughter of one of Stalin's wartime cabinet. The state police was "cleansed", and "unreliable" officers were replaced with party members. At the last moment our Commander in Chief got wind of what was happening, and the army and navy were put on alert. Although the details are still unclear, there is little doubt that we nearly went the way of Czechoslovakia.

Economically the war reparation programme was crushing. During the first year more than 60 per cent of Finland's total exports was sent as a "gift" to the Soviet Union. We were forced to modernise our industry, so as to deliver equipment free of charge to the Russians. Because of Soviet pressure, Finland was not allowed to receive any Marshall Aid. Food rationing continued for years. The reparation deliveries were only completed in late 1952. Ironically this struggle provided Finland with a new, modern metal industry which became the springboard for unparalleled industrial expansion.

During all these years, it never occurred to us students to emigrate to easier conditions.

The continuous threat from the Soviet Union made every link to the West worth gold. So many decisions about our country had been made outside Finland: now we needed to establish a powerful international presence so that we could affect decisions concerning us. A global approach was still alien to most people in Finland, but Mannerheim did his utmost to break our isolation.

In 1945 he appointed my uncle, Aleksi Lehtonen, Archbishop of Finland. Lehtonen had strong links with the West and, in spite of the formal enmity between Finland and Britain, the Bishop of

Fulham came to his inauguration in Turku. My brother and I were invited to take part in the festivities.

We travelled to Turku by train, through what was known as "the longest tunnel in Europe". Under the armistice treaty, the Soviets had taken over a large area immediately west of Helsinki as a military base. Soon after we left Helsinki station we reached the "border". The doors between the carriages were locked, the windows were covered by wooden shutters, Russian officers boarded the train and a Russian locomotive replaced the Finnish one. The trip through the "tunnel" to free Finland lasted one hour. Then the windows were uncovered and a Finnish locomotive pulled the train the rest of the way to Turku.

At the grand dinner in the Bishop's Palace in old Turku, President Mannerheim stood up and spoke solemly about the situation in the country. At one point he turned to the Prime Minister, J K Paasikivi, and said forcefully, "The Prime Minister is doing everything in his power to save the country from its hard pressed situation." Mannerheim had never been generous with praise to those closest to him. Paasikivi's chin began to shake at this public recognition of his efforts and, although he tried to control himself, big tears dropped onto the dinner table.

Mannerheim also tried to give hope. "Times of hardship have always been times of mercy," he said.

Perhaps it was the sailor's blood from my father's side and the experiences of the past years that made me long for wider travel. My dream was to go to Britain to get the technical training which was compulsory for my degree. But our countries were still formally at war. I found the addresses of 41 chemical firms and wrote to each of their managing directors. It was not long before the answers came dropping in. They pointed out politely that the political situation, the state of war between Finland and Britain and the general unclarity made it impossible to consider my application.

After I had opened the 39th rejection, my father said, "You're mad, as I've told you from the beginning." Then the 40th letter

arrived. If I could prove that I was not a Communist, they would try to get me a special permit in six months' time. The head of the company was somewhat startled when he received a letter from the Archbishop of Finland eloquently praising me and asserting that I was certainly not a Communist. The formalities were tedious: I even had to queue to get a Swedish transit visa.

My English was hopeless, as German had been the main foreign language at school, and my knowledge about England and the English was limited, to put it mildly. Conservative, correct, different, I thought. I consulted an older schoolmate. "The English are quite natural and pleasant," she said. "You will have no difficulties. But there are two things you must remember: be prepared for a lot of rain, and take a dinner jacket." There was no clothing in the shops, everything was rationed. But then it crossed my mind that Finland was full of war widows, and one might have her dead husband's dinner jacket in her wardrobe. I tracked one down through an advertisement, and Mother refitted it on her sewing machine.

Thus equipped I set off, in early May 1947. After a written application the Bank of Finland granted me one pound for travel expenses - and when I applied again generously increased the sum to two pounds. The money was not enough for the final train journey but a kind man on the train to Manchester lent me ten pounds as starting capital.

The factory was in Widnes in Merseyside, close to Liverpool. According to the technical director the town was "without doubt the ugliest and dirtiest town in Britain", the birthplace of the British chemical industry. I got cheap accommodation with a Welsh miner's family. Life was simple, but people were suprisingly lively and cordial. There was no trace of stiffness and formality. But what on earth would I need a dinner jacket for?

One hot July Sunday I decided to go to Southport to refresh myself in the Irish Sea. An English family on the beach saw me reading a paper in an incomprehensible language and started a conversation. They were fascinated by Finland, about which they knew nothing. After an hour the father, who was an importer of

Californian fruit, asked me to dinner at their home the next Sunday. A chic dark-eyed daughter made it easy to accept immediately. The father told me how to find the address, and added, "By the way, I assume you have a dinner jacket?" "Naturally," I replied.

In the autumn I travelled to London to obtain a visa to return home via Holland. A friend in Sweden had given me some addresses. One Sunday morning I chose one of them at random and walked from my travellers' lodgings in Aldgate East to the West End to visit a certain Mr Sciortino. I finally reached a small bookshop in a simple back street. Could this really be his home? A friendly elderly lady opened the door and told me that Mr Sciortino was unfortunately abroad. "Well, then I'll just leave it," I said. "Do you know Mr Sciortino?" the lady asked. "No, I don't, I am just a friend of one of his friends, so thank you very much and goodbye." But the lady did not give up, "I'll ask Jim to come down, he can tell you more." "About what?" I wondered. She rang a bell, and down the stairs came Jim Buckman, a young teacher who had worked in Pakistan.

It turned out that the bookshop belonged to the Oxford Group, a movement for personal and national renewal which had had a considerable impact in Scandinavia in the 1930's. Although Aleksi Lehtonen had been powerfully influenced by it and had invited its founder, Frank Buchman, and his colleagues to visit the Nordic countries, I hardly knew anything about it. I could remember a heated discussion at the table in our home about the "absolutes" which the Group stood for - absolute honesty, unselfishness, purity, love. With the narrow-mindedness of a sixteen-year-old, I had argued for absolute honesty. "A thing is either true or it's a lie," I said. Mother replied that life is not that simple or schematic.

Jim told me that the work of the Group was now known as Moral Re-Armament, often abbreviated to MRA. He led me through the house to its other side on Berkeley Square, a lovely big house that had belonged to Clive of India. He played a record for me with some swinging tunes from one of MRA's musical

reviews. It was not music I was used to linking with religious activities. I listened politely to what Jim told me, but had my reservations, although I was curious. But this was hardly something for me.

Jim invited me to his home before I left. When we said goodbye he gave me a book called *Ideas have Legs*. I don't particularly want to study the history of ideas in a foreign language, I thought to myself, but for politeness' sake I'll probably have to, and I can of course treat it as language training. Soon I had read the book twice. There was something about it that evoked an instinctive response. Its author, Peter Howard, had been one of the sharpest editorial writers on the *Daily Express* and described the dramatic change of direction which had brought him to to a faith which affected all his choices. This was something I wanted to know more about.

In Holland I met my father's family for the first time. My uncle met me at Rotterdam harbour. I recognized him from a distance: the nose and fair Norwegian complexion were unmistakable.

My old grandmother had lost everything, except a photo of my brother and a single book, when the Germans attacked Arnhem where she lived. Like her children, she was fresh and straightforward. I began to understand father better. His brothers and sisters were solid, unsentimental people, good with their hands. None of them expected someone else to do a job for them. Although none of them were "religious", they had a strong feeling for justice and freedom.

They were all incurable individualists too. As a boy, my youngest uncle had travelled to Canada to lay rails for the Pacific railway. As he spoke Dutch, he had ended up in the Dutch colony of Java, as sales manager for Ford, and spent twenty years there. The climate nearly finished him off and he returned to the Netherlands and founded a silver fox farm near Arnhem. This was destroyed when the Germans occupied the country. He had started to cooperate with the Americans and successfully hid paratroopers until he was caught, condemned to death and mirac-

ulously escaped. He showed me a letter of thanks from Eisenhower. He had ended the war poor, but later discovered high-quality sand under his land and became, if not a millionaire, certainly well-to-do.

My father's oldest sister was a teacher, who had married a widower with twelve children between one and fourteen. Another sister had landed up through marriage in Borneo and a third in Curacao in the West Indies. Father's oldest brother was the only one who had remained in Holland all the time. For a long time he had been Norwegian Consul and had helped Jews to flee.

It was now November and time to return to Finland. The boat was to leave from Amsterdam, but on the appointed day there was no ship in port. It turned out that it had left the day before. My money had run out, so I started to walk along the quays, hoping to find another possibility. My luck was in. After searching for an hour I found *SS Zorro,* a small 80-year-old steamer with a Finnish flag on the stern. I went on board and met Captain Niska, nephew of the smuggler king Algot Niska, and the ship-owner, Bergström. I explained my dilemma. "Welcome on board, you are the guest of the shipping company," the captain said with a sweeping gesture. "But first we have to go to Antwerp, to load our cargo. So the journey will take at least a couple of weeks."

Life in Antwerp at the end of the war was colourful. During the night customs officers, policemen and sailors, in brotherly European unity, carried smuggled coffee onto the different ships, including the *Zorro.* One evening Captain Niska invited me to a party on the *Aranda,* another Finnish ship. Customs officials, sailors and policemen sat around the table in splendid harmony, singing and chatting. The liquor cupboard was duly locked with a lead seal. In a solemn voice the captain of the *Aranda* asked everybody to look away for a moment. They all roared with laughter. A sailor entered the room, unscrewed the marble top of the cupboard, and pulled out the bottles, one after the other.

At long last the *Zorro* steamed off, heavily loaded with iron beams. It ploughed its way at a leisurely speed towards Kiel. The

minefields were mostly uncleared and the ship had to follow a narrow, marked route. A storm blew up and when the mine-free route suddenly turned sharply to the right, *Zorro* heaved violently. Everything on the dinner table slid to the floor and so did the mattress in my cabin. The lashings around the steel beams began to loosen. At every new heave the beams crashed against the side of the old ship. Captain Niska sent his men down into the hull to lash the beams together, but it was an impossible task, and he ordered everyone up on deck in case the hull broke up. The crew checked the lifeboats. The captain and the shipowner stood confidently on the bridge, each with a brandy bottle in his hand. Just before the Kiel canal the mine-cleared route took another sharp turn, and the heaving finally ended.

As we approached Helsinki, the men started to wrap the smuggled coffee up in countless "Christmas parcels", "To dear Aunt Anna", etc. The crew agreed that if there was a customs search one man, who had not been arrested before, would take full responsibility. Each person's share of a possible fine was accurately calculated in advance.

The excitement grew. To which harbour would we be directed? The port of Katajanokka in central Helsinki would mean trouble, but the customs officers were friendly in the West Port, the first mate told me. The radio message came, "Steer the *Zorro* to the West Port." The crew broke into a great cheer. Just before the ship berthed, a new Persian carpet was placed on the floor of the captain's cabin. The next day it was taken for "dry cleaning".

A month later I read in the paper that the *Zorro* had just arrived at Katajanokka and that customs had confiscated a large quantity of smuggled coffee. One of the sailors had confessed to "sole responsibility".

PART II: NOT ALONE

10. Breaking out

My studies went full speed ahead and I went on seeing the artist. Soon we were unofficially engaged. But every now and then we found it hard to really connect. It began to dawn on me that it would be tricky to build a relationship on the basis of an attraction to a pretty face and some superficial common interests. I tried to persuade myself that it was like this for most people, and that it would probably would turn out fine with time; that I was being too demanding. But I was disturbed by a gnawing restlessness. Finally there was a break and after a controversy we decided to part ways.

I felt relieved but at the same time unhappy. Had I made the wrong decision? This worry, combined with others, plunged me into a deep hole. I was absorbed in anxieties and self-pity.

There was no one I felt I could ask for advice. One evening I felt a strong inner compulsion to fall on my knees and ask God to take care of it all, to untangle the knots and begin to guide my life. As I did this, I felt that my mind was divided and my prayer hollow. I was terrified by the ultimate consequences of such a decision. In my despair I prayed: "God, help me to mean what I say!" Something happened. An inner calm filled me, and I knew I truly wanted to find God's way, without having any idea what it would involve, nor any demand to know.

I started to read the Bible and, to my surprise, found it a journey of discovery into a fascinating world. A student friend, Pentti

Tamminen, invited me to help start a Christian association in the Technical University. This was an answer to my longing for a deeper level of contact with other students. Professor Pentti Kaitera was a powerful support, and within a few years the association was one of the biggest in the university, with over 100 members. We tried to discover what it meant to live as Christians in the industrial and business world, and arranged joint conferences with corresponding groups in Norway and Sweden. We made contact with a mission which was providing professional training in industry for young Indians, and one of our group went to work there after his final exams. We had plans to start a professional school in Sikkim.

It was now the end of October 1948, and we were coming to the end of our studies. Fifteen of us got together with the student chaplain to discuss how to continue our Christian involvement after leaving university. "The logical step is to join your own congregation," the pastor suggested. "And what tasks can a layman do there?" asked one student. "Many important ones, such as taking the collection on Sundays." The disappointment was like the air going out of a balloon. The active and meaningful commitment we had experienced together had come to an end. Was that all a Christian in industry could do – be an inoffensive attendant at Sunday services and do as good and honest a job as possible?

It was at this point that we ran into two industrialists who revolutionized our conception of a Christian layman. One was Oscar Sumelius, Chairman of the Board of the Kyro paper industries in Central Finland, a jovial Swedish-speaker, who was popular in the sailing clubs and had rarely said no to the pleasures of life. The other, Heikki Herlin, was President of Finland's well-known Kone group. He was quick-witted, hot-tempered and purposeful, one of the architects of Finnish industry. They seemed an ill-assorted pair. What made them so keen to work together?

Gertrud Sucksdorff, the wife of an industrialist in Tampere, had got to know a group of workers through their shared interest in the Oxford Group. They thought that Sumelius could benefit

from some change and invited him to a conference. Although he was not at all interested in what they stood for, he accepted because he was flattered to be invited by a group of workers. Something happened inside him – but what people noticed first was the external difference. Because many of his colleagues in Finnish business life had run into difficulties with liquor, he decided to stop drinking alcohol. As the Governor of Rotary, he used to write a monthly letter to all the country's Rotary clubs. In it he told them about his decision and asked them to respect it.

Years later I went with Sumelius to a Rotary lunch in Kemi in North Finland. When we went in, a man hurried forward, stretched out his hand to Sumelius and said: "I have stuck to it!" This man had heard Sumelius' letter being read out at a Rotary meeting. He had previously managed to free himself from his dependence on alcohol after a considerable struggle, but had relapsed after attending a banquet at which even the church minister had filled himself with brandy. When he had heard of Sumelius' decision, he had thought, "If Sumelius, in the midst of business life, has the courage to give up drinking, then surely I can too!"

Sumelius decided to become totally open with his wife, Anni, a former leader of the women's voluntary wartime organization, *Lotta Swärd*. Their marriage, which had been in difficulties, was healed. Sumelius became a bridgebuilder in industry, crossing the barriers of class and language. He was someone to whom you felt you could open your "inner doors" in full confidence. He had a winning simplicity and sincerity, and no exaggerated picture of his own importance. So he was astonished when one of Finland's leading industrialists said to him, "Oscar, you don't realize what you have meant for Finnish industry."

Heikki Herlin's sullenness and acerbity was only an outer shell. He was extremely sensitive and easily moved to tears by the suffering of a fellow being. Before the war he too had experienced a turning point through meeting the Oxford Group. After the war he pioneered a new foundation for cooperation between Finland and Russia on the basis of personal links. He learnt to speak

Russian fluently. In his own company he saw human capital as the foremost resource, an attitude few shared 50 years ago. This emphasis on human relationships perhaps explains why Kone has grown into a world combine of more than 26,000 employees.

Sumelius and Herlin had heard about our gang at the Technical University and contacted us. What struck us was that for them life was not divided into different compartments, professional, Christian and spare-time. They believed that God had a plan for them, for Finland, for the world, and that it was worth staking everything on finding and carrying out this plan. They felt that unity between management and labour was vital, at a time when the Communists were fomenting class war, in the hopes that strikes would obstruct our reparations deliveries and give the Soviet Union an excuse to intervene. They arranged meetings and seminars, and even theatrical productions – performed by people from industry – to point to greater priorities than class conflict.

Few theologians had shown us such a perspective. To them a good Christian was someone who was diligent in his daily work and did not indulge in questionable escapades during his time off. Many clergymen did not grasp the willingness and longing deep inside many lay people. The idea that God could inspire individuals in their handling of industry and politics seemed beyond them.

At the end of my studies I was offered the chance of doing a doctorate, while continuing a research project for the cellulose industry. I hesitated. One steaming hot July day, as the bromine fumes hung heavy in the lab, I watched a research chemist interrupting his work for a few minutes to cook pea soup in a glass retort. There you have a true researcher, I thought. It wouldn't be too difficult to get a doctor's cap and gown, but how many doctors had ultimately advanced science? I doubted that I would be one of them. The meeting with Herlin and Sumelius had pointed to another reality and another need. I decided to do without the doctorate.

In the summer of 1950, Sumelius invited me to go to a world conference at Caux in Switzerland. I was now working as sales manager for the plastics group in an industrial chemical company which represented the British company ICI. I invited a friend from university to come along.

Five years had passed since the end of the war, but large parts of Europe were still in ruins. The bitterness was deeply seated. When Caux opened in 1946, it had been the first place where large groups of former enemies could meet on an equal footing. Thousands of Germans, French and Italians streamed to the conferences which took place over the next years. More than 100 Japanese dignitaries came to renew contacts with the West. Up to 1,000 participants had to be housed and fed, week after week.

Neither government, industry, church nor any big organization was behind these achievements. But, as I learned later in life, it is rarely large numbers who get a new impulse moving. Initiatives stand and fall with the few who are gripped by a vision and are willing to sacrifice for it. Here, too, it was that simple.

Three young Swiss had found a new meaning to life through the Oxford Group. They believed that Switzerland had not been spared the hardships of war because of the virtues of her people, but as a gift. Switzerland could now provide a meeting place where a new community of nations could begin to be built. They found an old hotel above Lake Geneva which was threatened with demolition. At first they were horrified by its size, as they had envisaged something smaller, but they clinched the deal to buy it.

Some hundred Swiss families helped them to raise the money: some gave all their capital, others sold their summer cottages. People from many other countries joined in. Heikki Herlin donated a Kone elevator. The company which I joined twenty years later provided incandescent lamps. Lennart Segerstråle, the great Finnish painter, painted a fresco which covered an entire wall of the large dining room. He called it *The water of life.* It showed people of all races coming to the well to quench their own thirst and then bringing the water to the nations.

Just before World War II the Oxford Group's founder, Frank Buchman, had launched an appeal for moral and spiritual armament as the only realistic counterweight to the ever more menacing military armament. Moral Re-Armament (MRA) was basically a direct continuation of the Oxford Group, with an even greater emphasis on national and international affairs.

Caux opened a window to the world for me, and I experienced a concrete expression of the global perspective Mannerheim had pleaded for so insistently. Several dozen Finnish MPs and major delegations from management and trade unions had had similar experiences during the previous four summers. Nearly every meal was a gateway to a new nation or to an extraordinary life story. One day I had breakfast with the legendary defender of Warsaw, General Tadeusz Bor Komorovski. He had carefully followed Finland's progress through the war and Mannerheim's role, but had never been able to understand how Finland had managed to survive. "What was the secret of Finland?" he asked.

Most people at Caux had heard of Mannerheim and his courageous leadership. Between 1947 and 1951 he spent extended periods in a convalescence home in Valmont, just below Caux, and today there is a small lakeside park and monument to his memory in Montreux. In 1949 two Finnish girls who were staying at Caux met Mannerheim as they walked along the road at Valmont. They found that he was keenly interested in what was happening at Caux.

Mannerheim writes with appreciation about his visits to Switzerland, and particularly his talks with General Guisan, the wartime Commander in Chief of the Swiss Army. When he was finally admitted to hospital in Lausanne in 1951, he said to the doctor with a smile: "I have fought many wars in my lifetime, and experienced many battles. But I think I shall lose this battle, the final one." His Swiss nurse said, "This was just how I had pictured a man who was going into battle."

Volunteers did all the practical work at Caux. I joined a dish-washing and service shift – and discovered that a work-team was a good place to begin to understand and appreciate other nations.

We often washed up for eight hours at a stretch, but there was a great spirit of teamwork, and after midnight we rewarded ourselves with a big bowl of ice-cream and long conversations. In the process I got to know my compatriot, Pauli Snellman, who was giving all his time to the work of MRA. We were to work together for the next 46 years.

After the first powerful impressions – the beautiful alpine scenery, the colourful international setting, meeting Frank Buchman, who I had heard so much about – life became less agreeable. I realized that the great things that happened at Caux did not come about through general goodwill. You had to switch onto a new track, and this meant daring to look at yourself through God's eyes and implementing the conclusions. Otherwise talk of Christian endeavour was hollow.

Starting with oneself sounded like a logical and simple approach, but it was rare in normal life. There was a young Arab whose family had lived for generations in the area which today is Israel. They had suffered deeply and he said that he could never love a Jew until that Jew had become different. After a few weeks at Caux he realized that he never could influence anyone to become different before he had learnt to love them.

Loudon Hamilton, a Scottish veteran of World War I, attracted me with his crackling dry humour. It was in his student rooms in Oxford that the Oxford Group had got started, when Buchman attended a session of the students' Beef and Beer Club. Hamilton told of his experiments with the "four absolutes" of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love, a short summary of the Sermon on the Mount. The point was to have standards that were absolute, because otherwise they would have no value. He joked about a lady who had imagined that her laundry was white until she met a neighbour who used Superb washing powder. I realized that these "absolutes" had nothing to do with moralising. They were the laws of life itself, and the question was whether I wanted to reject them or build on them.

The word "absolute" both irritated and fascinated me. It simply

didn't work in practical life, I thought. But at the same time I felt that it would simplify life to have guidelines which were anchored in one's conscience and did not depend on how other people interpreted things. Hamilton also pointed out that these four roadsigns had to be seen as an entity. Honesty without love made you hard and judging, love without honesty led to softness and appeasement.

Did I have the courage to be quiet before God and expose my life to the light of these standards? My theology-saturated relatives had guaranteed that I knew the word "sin". But it was not until Caux that the concept touched me deeply and I realized that sin was everything that separated me from God and from other people. Someone had once asked me whether I hated anyone. "Certainly not," I had replied. Now I understood that the opposite of love was self-centredness and indifference, just as much as hate. I could immediately think of people who did not interest me in the least.

After some hesitation I decided to make an honest experiment. After all, I didn't need to tell anyone about it. The first thought was a surprise. It concerned Leif, my younger brother. The war had been one of the high points in his life, for although he had never advanced beyond a private, he had been accepted and valued by his comrades. But since then his studies had not gone well, his health had been damaged and his nerves were not strong. He often felt a failure, although he was extraordinary in his care for other people, especially the forgotten and the weak.

The thought now struck me that I should write to Leif, ask his forgiveness for my indifference to his problems and tell him honestly about what my own life had been like behind the facade. I felt deeply ashamed of having avoided being seen in his company when he was most depressed. I hesitated for a long time before I sat down to write the letter, telling him things I had not wanted anybody to know, least of all my family. I walked up and down the village road outside the post office six times before I finally dropped the letter into the box.

This letter was the beginning of a new day for Leif. He realized

that his difficulties were not unique, that fundamentally we had similar thoughts, temptations and troubles. In the past he had sometimes feared that the war years would prove to be the best part of his life. Now a new expectancy about the future began to fill him. He met a fine Dutch girl who had been interned in a Japanese concentration camp in Java throughout the war.

Sadly they were not to have a long life together: three years later Leif suddenly died of a haemorrhage. I was in France at the time: I wept all the way home. There was sorrow at my loss, and guilt over all the years I had failed to be the friend he had desperately needed. But I was also able to thank God for the new relationship we had found and the new life he had experienced.

I also wrote another letter. I believed honesty was important in business, but when I asked myself how honest I had actually been myself, I remembered that I had cheated in an exam. I wrote to the President of the Technical University and confessed. Twenty years later a businessman asked me what my first step on this new road had been. I told him about the letter. "Oh well, that's a trifle," he said. "Quite right," I replied. In itself it was a trifle. But that one decision helped me later to have the courage to take a stand when I was under pressure to make dishonest decisions.

"I suspect that Caux will be the richest experience of my life so far," I wrote home from Switzerland. I did not mean the extraordinary human stories I had heard, the bridge-building that was taking place between nations and classes, all that I had learned about industry, but rather the inner dimension which I had discovered, the dynamics of silence, the idea of starting each day alone before God. Something had happened. I saw that life was meant to be one whole, with no separate compartments for spiritual and professional life. It was an extraordinary liberation. Back in Finland I travelled to our summer cottage. As I walked the last kilometre from the bus, nature seemed more beautiful than ever before. I was amazed.

A few months later Heikki Herlin invited Pentti Tamminen and me to go to Britain for an industrial gathering and to visit various

firms afterwards. We visited Ford's big assembly lines in Dagenham in East London. The tempo was high. "What happens if one specialist on the assembly line suddenly falls out?" I asked the technical director. "Don't call them specialists," he said. "For me workers are only numbers." No wonder that many conflicts had struck the factory. I began to see how much the spirit of Caux was needed and, when some of the workers and staff began to put it into practice, how few people were needed to bring about a change of direction.

11. Damn it!

One day after work Heikki Herlin invited me to the home of Viljo Lampela, a film cameraman, to discuss a project aimed at creating harmony in Finnish industry. Finland's future now depended entirely on whether we managed to keep up the war reparation payments – if we failed, as the Communists hoped, the Russians could take over. We could not count on any external help whatsoever.

Viljo Lampela had been a fighter pilot in the war and subsequently worked in Finland's biggest film company. His wife, Kaija, had been a celebrated actress. They had both experienced drastic inner change through the Oxford Group. Viljo had a volatile artistic nature in which enthusiasm and recklessness alternated with feelings of despair, but somehow his faith always seemed to win through in the end.

Viljo had completed a screenplay with an industrial theme, but he had no resources to carry through the project. We had to decide whether the idea would work. That evening was the start of an adventurous year for me – and the beginning of the end of a "normal" business career.

We studied the script. It told the story of the battle for control both between and within management and unions, based on the real experiences of various factories. Which way would win – cynicism and class war? Or reconciliation, the common good and ethical standards? The story ended with a dramatic propaganda

meeting in the factory. The trade union leader who was fighting for unity was hit on the head by a piece of iron thrown by a fanatical adversary and sank to the ground. There was no happy ending or patent solution.

We realized that as a film it could help to break down walls of prejudice. The problem was the casting, equipment, money, props, and above all how to create a taskforce which would invest their time, energy and imagination, without any remuneration. Viljo called together a group to pray and ask God for advice. "If this is His will the resources must exist," he reasoned. Something in us caught fire.

We agreed to start. Herlin and Sumelius volunteered to take the parts of the chief executives and some trade union veterans those of the labour leaders. Pentti and I undertook to mobilize a gang from the Technical University to tackle the innumerable practical tasks. We were not over-reticent about this. One evening we were sitting in Pentti's room, when a fellow student named Niilo strolled by. "Come in," we shouted and told him what was brewing. An hour later he said, "I'll put off my studies for a year!" Many others followed his example.

For months we met at seven every morning before going to work, to plan and to pray together. At noon we had a short working lunch with Herlin in his office. Every evening we worked until midnight. The shooting took place in five major factories in Southern and Eastern Finland. We worked all through New Year's Eve – the only time the buildings were empty – in the Strömberg factory, today Asea Brown Bovery.

One evening as we were hammering out our plans at Viljo's, an elderly powerfully built farmer entered the room and broke into the discussions. "Now we shall start fighting!" he said in a deep bass. His mighty, bushy eyebrows partly hid his clear eyes. "I want a technical student as a driver, and then we are off to raise money!" During the coming months Gustaf Rosenqvist visited the chief executives of 430 Finnish companies – not to beg, but to offer them the privilege of doing something for their country.

Rosenqvist was heart and soul a farmer. After seven years of marriage he had at last had a son, who could take over the farm one day. When the boy was four days old, his nurse dropped him onto the stone floor and he died. Mrs Rosenqvist never recovered. Some bury their sorrow in liquor, but Gustaf buried his in work. He worked with the Nobel Prize winner AI Virtanen to introduce new agricultural methods throughout the world, and between his travels he toiled on his farm. After the war he took part in an Oxford Group gathering, where a friend from Sweden helped him to see that he could be liberated from the burdens he carried. Rosenqvist left the meeting a new man, his rebellion against God ended.

Gustaf Rosenqvist had previously been a sworn enemy of all trade unions. Now he asked union representatives to come and start a local branch at his farm. He apologized to his workers for having treated them more like machines than people, and decided to share half his profits with them. He gave them all land where they could build their own homes, and he issued a personal guarantee for their housing loans.

The Finnish TUC used to send Soviet delegates to his farm to study what a new spirit had achieved. On one occasion the Russians asked why milk production had increased even though the number of cows had not. "Ask the women who do the milking," answered Rosenqvist. The women told them that when their boss had begun to treat them like fellow citizens, they in their turn had started to treat the cows better. "The cows need love in order to milk well," Rosenqvist added.

Rosenqvist told people about the results of his new experiences wherever he went. He made a particularly strong impression in Germany's industrial heartland, the Ruhr, where a bitter class struggle raged. He never offered theories but instead gave his personal evidence of what God can do in an individual's life. In his old age he donated his farm to the Salvation Army.

Work continued on the film, which we called *The Answer*. Jean Sibelius allowed us to use his music – something he had never

done for a full-length feature film before – and also waived his royalties. The Helsinki City Orchestra and its conductor, Tauno Hannikainen, gave their services free to record the 3rd and 7th Symphonies for the film, and my cousin Veikko Helasvuo, subsequently the Head of the Sibelius Academy, conducted a choir of over 100 in singing Sibelius' majestic *Rise up O Nations,* which had never been performed in Finland before. Risto Orko, the grand old man of the Finnish film industry, made all his filming equipment and laboratories available free.

We now had to set a date for the première. We decided to start with a gala performance for invited guests at the Savoy cinema in the heart of Helsinki, and then release the film to the whole country. One week before the opening, a series of mishaps occurred. The technical group worked around the clock, sleeping on the laboratory floor. Had we fixed the opening night too soon? The invitations had been sent out and it was too late to stop now.

My mother's health had deteriorated during the last years, and she now spent most of her time in bed. This did not prevent her from living intensely into all we were doing. She mobilized her former Sunday school pupils in Vihti to pray daily for the venture.

On 19 March 1952, 800 guests filled the cinema to the last seat. There were some 40 from Parliament and the Cabinet, and twenty industrial and trade union leaders from different European countries. Leea Vannas, the heroine of the film, presented roses to the wife of President Paasikivi at the entrance. There was great expectancy in the air.

The gala audience followed the drama on the screen, unconscious of the drama outside the cinema. Only the first two of the six reels were in the projection room when the film started. The other four were still in the laboratory. Viljo paced the cinema's lobby, cursing and praying in turns. I walked beside him trying to calm him. A Volkswagen bus drove back and forth bringing the reels, one at a time, from the lab to the projection room. "Where's the next reel?" shouted the projectionist as he reached the last five minutes of the fifth. Then the breathless messenger arrived.

A shaken Viljo Lampela received the congratulations. Two days later the public double première took place in Helsinki, and Suomi-Filmi distributed the film throughout the country.

Tampere, known as the "Manchester of Finland", had been the site of the biggest battle of the 1917-18 war of liberation. The city had been torn by class strife ever since and was now in the midst of an industrial crisis. All the trade union leaders and shop stewards from one big factory came to see the film. Afterwards, the chairman opened a crucial meeting in the factory by asking all those present to "conduct the debate in the spirit we just have witnessed in the film". Unity was achieved. We heard similar examples from many quarters.

In the summer of 1952, Finland hosted the Olympic Games, demonstrating to the world that we were a free country in spite of all rumours to the contrary. We decided to arrange a performance of *The Answer* for foreign visitors during the Olympics. One of those who came was Frits Philips, Vice-President of the Dutch electronics multinational. "This film is too important to remain within the borders of Finland," he said. "I am prepared to do anything I can to get it out." He could hardly have imagined what he had embarked on.

The fellowship and commitment of those who created and supported the film gave as strong a message as the film itself. As the work progressed, I had become increasingly aware of the importance of the spirit in which industry and business were conducted. So few people seemed to take this seriously, but I felt it was as vital as production and sales. I had seen what the reorientation of someone's inner life could mean for an enterprise and even for the relationship between countries.

One morning early I knew that I should leave my regular job and give all my time to building a new spirit in world industry, through working with MRA. On 19 September 1952 Finland's war reparations to the Soviet Union would be completed, and I felt that my social and civilian "national service" would be fulfilled and I would be free to step out into the world. But what

would my family say, and my colleagues? I asked Heikki Herlin for advice. He encouraged me to follow my convictions. I lay awake long into the night thinking about the matter, and quietly an inner certainty ripened. I fell on my knees and decided to take the step.

I told my parents about my decision. "What will your salary be?" Father asked. "Nothing," I answered. He was quiet for a while, and then said tersely, "I demand freedom, and I give freedom. Do what you like!" But he was deeply disappointed. He had been rejoicing that his son was on the point of making a career in industry. Mother understood. She knew that if God had given certainty, you must not hesitate.

I was also anxious about what my employers would say. Before I went in to see the director, I went into the empty visitors' room, and prayed that God would guide it all. "Damn it!" cursed one of the directors when I gave in my notice. The whole company was buzzing with talk and rumours. But I was encouraged when the top boss said, "If you return to us, there will be a job waiting for you – and if there is none, we will create one."

Father had been having extra expenses because of illness. I gave all my savings to him, after I had bought a one-way train ticket to Caux and 100 razor blades, so that I would be reasonably presentable should my cash run out.

When I arrived in Caux, where an industrial conference was taking place, an English friend, Edward Goulding, took me to meet Frank Buchman, who was sick in his room. He shook my hand with great warmth and said one word, "Welcome!" I did not need anything more: somehow I knew that I had come to the right place.

12. The four goads

One day at Caux Pauli Snellman and I were invited to join Frits Philips and Oscar Sumelius in a discussion about *The Answer* with Frank Buchman. After we had talked, Buchman suggested that we should be quiet together. "What thoughts did you have?" Buchman asked. "Take it to the world," said Sumelius. With a roguish smile Buchman said, "And I believe that Frits Philips can make the vision become a reality in Eindhoven!"

The Answer had already been shown outside Finland. An American trade union leader and an employer in the steel industry in Pittsburgh had heard how the film had helped resolve conflicts in Finnish industry. At that point the American steel industry was paralyzed by a strike. Perhaps the film could give a new impulse, they thought. They borrowed a Finnish language copy and arranged a showing with an interpreter for half a dozen of the leaders of the biggest steel companies and unions at one o'clock in the morning. This mini-show played a part in smoothing the road to a settlement. Many were now eager to get the film dubbed into English.

Viljo Lampela and I met those who were to be the English voices in Eindhoven. Amongst them were Loudon Hamilton and Alan Thornhill, a gentle-hearted Anglican priest who had written several plays for MRA, some of which had been seen all over the world. Thornhill had an ingenious way of finding striking English expressions which matched the monstrously long

Finnish words.

Edward Goulding also took part. He had an infectious faith – and a dry humour and openness about himself – which encouraged people to open up about themselves. Before the war, he had helped Heiki Herlin to make his new start. Edward had been in Oslo when the Germans occupied Norway and had made a dramatic escape back to Britain over the mountains and sea. He provided the voice for Herlin's part in the film – a sullen, swearing executive – and showed a talent for interpreting both the silence and hot-headedness of the Finns. Every now and then Viljo's stubbornness and artistic temperament caused crises in Eindhoven, but Edward's generosity and wisdom usually solved them quickly.

At first we lived in the Philips family home. The voice of Frits Philips' wife, Sylvia, was also used in the dubbing. As soon as the Philips' employees had finished their working day, we moved into the ELA sound studios and usually worked into the early hours of the morning. From the beginning the head of the department opposed our presence, even though he had, following orders, appointed a group of technicians to help us.

Although Philips manufactured many kinds of projectors, they did not possess equipment adapted for film dubbing. This led to a dramatic stand-off early in the proceedings, with Frits Philips, whose prestige was on the line, suggesting new experiments to get round the problem, and his technicians maintaining that the work could only be done in a specially built studio. We watched, sweated and prayed helplessly. We could not afford to do the work elsewhere.

One of our group was a young German, George Pick, who had once worked with films. He suddenly stood up, walked over to one of the machines and presented a simple but ingenious idea which he believed might work.The Philips technicians could not gainsay him, and we now got going in earnest.

The project would have failed several times without George, a quiet man, who usually stayed in the background. He had Jewish origins and his father, the Lord Mayor of Stettin, had been thrown

out by the Nazis and later sent to Auschwitz. George somehow escaped to Ireland. Few knew about his background and he tried to make himself as English as possible. As our work progressed he began to regain his self-confidence. A turning point came when he decided to acknowledge his background, identify himself with his homeland and revert to his original Christian name, Jürgen.

When the technical work did not demand my presence, I enjoyed meeting the portworkers of Rotterdam and the steelworkers of Northern Holland. My father's second home country won my heart and I eagerly began to learn Dutch.

Immediately after the private première of the English version of *The Answer,* the hostile head of department apologized for his opposition. He now understood what we were trying to achieve and was glad that his department had been able to participate. Perhaps he was won over by the honesty and openness with which we worked together – in spite of our international diversity and the explosions which frequently took place.

Frits Philips' involvement with *The Answer* sealed his attachment to Finland. At one point the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote to all the country's leading industrialists, to warn them against major longterm investment in Finland because of the political uncertainty hanging over the country. Philips called on the Foreign Minister and indignantly pointed out that the recommendation in the letter would push Finland towards Russia. "If you want to safeguard a free and democratic Finland then you must act precisely in the opposite way," Philips said. The Minister ordered all the letters to be withdrawn.

During the spring of 1953 Heikki Herlin arrived unexpectedly in Holland and asked me to meet him in Amsterdam. He offered me a job as a director in one of Kone's companies. Maybe here was a chance, I thought, to help advance Finnish industry after the hard years of war reparations. It is not every day that a top industrialist offers a young engineer such an opportunity. Supposing it was God's will?

For some days and nights I prayed intensively that neither fear nor ambition would lead me. One morning I knew that I should continue wholeheartedly on the path I was on. Heikki Herlin was disappointed but did not try to persuade me.

This decision did not, however, mean the end of doubts and struggles. That summer, back at Caux after a year of constant travel, I began to doubt what I had to offer to other people. Maybe they could manage just as well without it? I felt that the decision I had made to surrender my life to God had not been complete.

I began to see the "four absolutes" from a new angle. The Norwegian bishop Eivind Berggrav had once described them as "spurs" to living a whole-hearted Christian life. They placed me without excuse before God's holiness and revealed the hardness, cynicism and even lust for revenge that rose up in me on unexpected occasions. I had a passion to be proved right, an almost automatic instinct to explain things away and a cowardly fear of criticism.

One autumn day at Caux I found myself in a state of inner destitution – and knew that there was nothing I could do about it. The building was so full of people that the only space that Viljo and I could find to kneel down was in a washroom. Viljo came from a part of Finland which had experienced a religious revival in the mid-19th century. According to their tradition, he laid his hands on my head and prayed for me. I asked God to take my will completely. When we got up, I did not feel anything particular except an inner conviction that Jesus had not left me and that I could go forward with a free heart.

The Answer was shown several times a week that summer at Caux, and orders came in from the USA, Nigeria and India. I was invited to France to introduce the showings there.

One November morning my hostess brought me a telegram. A terse message from Father told me that Leif had died the previous night. Five French families collected the money for my air ticket home.

After the funeral I was anxious to know what my father thought

about my future. Mother was ill and Father had never been happy about my giving up my career. One day I asked him to give me a straight answer. He had been very close to Leif and was nearly paralyzed with grief. He had also seen the deep change which had taken place in him. He was quiet for a long time, then he said, "I want you to continue the work you feel called to." From then on he supported me completely, even with pride, and defended the path I had chosen when acquaintances attacked it.

Soon I was back in central France, where the steel industry was in turmoil and a group of industrialists and trade unionists were working for peace, using *The Boss,* an industrial play by Peter Howard, as their door-opener. For a long time I based in Firminy, where Claudius Petit, the Mayor and former Minister of Reconstruction, was our host. He was a man of strong social conscience and had chosen to live in Firminy because of its problems of poverty and class division.

We MRA visitors lived in a so-called "simple" hotel. By French standards the winter was cold, and the rooms were unheated. The toilets froze and the washing water in the porcelain jugs in our rooms was covered by ice. At five o'clock, morning after morning, we stood outside the factory gates in the darkness to give leaflets about the play to the morning shift as they arrived and the night shift as they left. During the day we went round asking the shops to put our colourful posters in their windows.

This is ridiculous, I thought to myself one day. I am 32 years old, I have a good university degree and I gave up the chance of a doctorate. I left a promising job and then I turned down an offer of a directorship. What would my former colleagues and my relatives think if they could see me here doing a job which a fifteen-year-old could do as well as I? But, just as during the war, we were comrades who were sticking together through thick and thin for the sake of a great endeavour. That mattered more than the status of the task we each performed.

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We saw our work as not merely helping individual companies,

but working to build Europe's future. The hottest issue of the day was whether the old arch-enemies of Germany and France could rebuild their economies together. Marxist forces in the Ruhr in Germany and in France tried to sabotage every effort towards unity. Meanwhile Robert Schuman, the former Foreign Minister of France, invited us to Thionville to help strengthen the relationships between the members of the European Coal and Steel Community of which he had been a co-creator.

Our months in France resulted in large delegations coming to the industrial conferences at Caux. I was there to welcome them, and to look after industrial groups which had come from Finland.

Four men came from the city of Jyväskylä in Central Finland. One of them was a construction worker called Antti, who had great problems with liquor. The others had brought him along because they had heard that Caux sometimes produced miracles in people. Somewhat apologetically they told us, "Antti should perhaps not have come with us, but we thought that something here might help him, although such an unschooled man cannot of course grasp what is going on." In fact, Antti was the first of the group to see the real point of Caux.

None of the four could speak a word of any language other than Finnish. I translated for them at every meeting, every meal and every work group from seven in the morning till midnight. Antti and I shared a small attic room in a building close by. We steadily became friends. Antti had a warm heart and in spite of his lack of languages built friendships in all directions.

Soon Antti started experimenting with listening to God and his conscience in the quiet of the morning and writing down his thoughts. We began to pray together in the evenings. One day he came to me with a letter in his hands. "I want to start a new life," he said. "Once, when my wife and I had a quarrel, one word led to another, and I shouted, 'If you don't shut up, I won't speak to you again'. And so I stopped talking to her – and I have stuck to this for thirteen years. Maybe I have said a spiteful word once or twice a week through the cat." Antti handed me the letter. "Would

you care to read this?"

It was a moving letter. Antti wrote how he had met "the four goads" at Caux, meaning the four absolute standards. "In the light of these, I have seen what my life has been like. I have decided to let God take care of my life. And now I want with all my heart to ask your forgiveness for these thirteen years." He ended the letter with the words, "And now I demand that you also accept the four goads into your life." He asked me what I thought. "It's a great letter," I said. "But maybe it is a bit strong to demand that your wife immediately accepts 'the four goads'. After all, you yourself have waited more than thirteen years! Perhaps you could write that you 'hope' rather than that you 'demand'." "Yes, that is appropriate," Antti said. He mailed the letter. Soon people at Caux began to notice that something had happened to him. Even his constant headaches disappeared.

Before the group from Jyväskylä returned to Finland they spoke at a meeting, attended by 600 people, including French MPs, the Mayor of Firminy and some large industrial groups from different countries. Antti was the last of the four to speak. He had never spoken in public before. He squirmed on the platform, full of feelings of inferiority. Then he simply told what he had experienced. Silence followed, and then the whole audience stood up and clapped. The Mayor, who was on the point of leaving, stepped forward to express his thanks for his days at Caux. Looking at Antti, he added, "The biggest experience of all was what I have just heard from the Finns!"

After the meeting a French industrialist and his wife forced their way through the crowd and asked me to translate what they wanted to say to Antti. "Our marriage was in pieces," he said. "But hearing you tell your story has made us decide to be really honest with each other, and to start a new life." Antti blushed. "To think that a simple man like me could mean something to others," he said.

In his home in Jyväskylä it was no longer silent, as long as he lived.

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13. Grabbing Finland's attention

Communism seemed to be gaining ground in the Cold War. Many in Finland were pessimistic about the prospects of the free world. A cabinet minister told me that our country had at most ten years of independence left. The poorest nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America were strongly drawn to Moscow and Eastern Europe. Although the atheism of Communism was alien to developing countries' culture and traditions, this did not dispose them to turn to the supposedly "Christian" West. They knew only too well that the capitalist countries' approach to the developing world was driven more by self interest than by altruism.

MRA's next big endeavour, a musical play by Peter Howard called *The Vanishing Island,* addressed some of the issues underlying the Cold War, particularly the materialism of East and West and the hope of forgiveness and reconciliation. Two hundred people travelled to Africa and Asia with this play and returned to Caux in 1955. We Finns felt *The Vanishing Island* had something to say to Finland and decided to invite it to come.

The only practical time for the visit seemed to be during the second half of November, and it was already October. Could we arrange everything so quickly? I went to get the advice of a friend in the leadership of the TUC. He was all for the idea and remarked that if we put on full sail immediately we might be able to receive the musical as early as April. "When is it coming, by the way?" he asked. "Next month!" I replied.

We now had to find a theatre, accomodation and cash, and translate everything into Finnish and print it - all at lightning speed. We had to find accommodation for 300 foreign visitors. Over 200 were put up in private homes and we managed to rent the old passenger ship *Arcturus* to accommodate others. We booked both the Finnish and Swedish National Theatres and also the Student Theatre. It was like an avalanche.The travelling force included some twenty Africans with their own play, *Freedom,* and a group of students with another, *We are tomorrow.* There were Maoris from New Zealand, Indians and Japanese. Hundreds of Finns gave money, some selling shares and paintings.

The Finnish Army brass band led a grand parade from the port through the city centre to a reception by the Lord Mayor and then on to the University where Eelis Gulin, Bishop of Tampere and Helsinki, received the visitors. President Paasikivi and his wife came to the première and received the whole delegation in the palace, where the Maoris performed a *haka* for him. Paasikivi was a man of deep faith and when he spoke he emphasized the importance of clarifying and strengthening the principles of right and wrong.

The days before the evening performances were filled with talks and meetings in schools, companies, universities and trade unions, where the visitors shared their personal experiences of how they had started in their own lives to transform society. It was neither theory nor theology: the power was in their real life experience.

One of the visitors was George West, an Anglican bishop who had worked for most of his life in Burma. He was an old friend of U Nu, the Prime Minister of Burma, who had just been visiting Moscow and was now embarking on a tour of Scandinavia, accompanied by U Thant, who later became the Secretary General of the UN. West invited U Nu to see *The Vanishing Island* while he was in Helsinki – but the problem was how to fit it into his programme. Eventually, on Saturday afternoon, a show was fixed for nine o'clock on Sunday morning. How were we going to fill the theatre? A message went out over the radio and

the hall was packed.

U Nu invited his host, Prime Minister Kekkonen, to accompany him to the play, a request which he could hardly refuse. Kekkonen watched intensely. He obviously wanted to see whether the message was consistent with Finnish foreign policy. "The show was good," he said at the end. He talked afterwards with many of the foreign visitors, including Fred Copeman, a former Communist from Britain who had fought in the Spanish Civil War. Copeman had left the party when the Soviet Union attacked Finland in 1939. "You are quite right that anti-Communism is no answer," said Kekkonen. "Could you do something for Northern Finland where many have lost their faith in Finnish democracy?" A few days later Kekkonen received a further delegation in his office for talks.

The sparks of *The Vanishing Island* fell everywhere. Every day the press was full of reports. Two daily newspapers issued four-page supplements. Numerous people made a new start in their lives, and many found their way back to church.

I became good friends with Vilho Harinen who was on the board of the TUC. At the age of sixteen he had fought for the Reds in the Civil War. After their defeat, he was put before a firing squad with twenty others. Perhaps the White officer was moved to see the childish face. He pulled Harinen aside before all the others were shot.

Harinen had been committed to the struggle of the working class for nearly 40 years. Through *The Vanishing Island* he saw a vision of a righteous society, and decided to start with himself. He asked me to go with him to Stockholm to meet Arne Geijer, the head of the Swedish TUC. Harinen apologized to Geijer for having used his position as financial manager to procure foreign currency for private purposes through the Swedish TUC, at a time after the war when no foreign currency could be obtained in Finland. He told Geijer that he had decided to be absolutely honest in all his affairs and to begin living the way he wanted others to live. He decided to do his utmost to settle the devastating class struggle in industry.

From Finland *The Vanishing Island* travelled north by special train to Kiruna, a mining city in Swedish Lapland. There too it was received with enthusiasm.

How does one measure the effect of a campaign like this? Spiritual and moral work cannot be measured statistically. Does the result correspond at all to the effort? MRA's goal was not to enlist members: we used to say that the aim was not to get people into a movement but to get movement into people.

It has become clearer to me over the years that, in the final analysis, helping individuals is the most important thing. Frank Buchman used to say that you cannot apply eye medicine from a second storey window. Ultimately our work consisted in one person passing on to another the best he had experienced, so that the other person could begin to seek God's way. I see MRA as a worldwide network of people who in all their weakness want to be channels, so that God's will can have a better chance in the world.

But there are times when you need to grab a nation's attention. Such big campaigns test the inner life of those who undertake them – you cannot pass on to others what you do not have yourself. The people who travelled with *The Vanishing Island* did not always get the spiritual nurturing they needed.

Buchman's most trusted co-worker, Peter Howard, felt particularly strongly about this. One summer at Caux he conducted a series of Bible studies on St Paul's life which are among the most precious times of fellowship I have ever experienced. He had an unbending passion that the soul of the MRA community should be strong.

The Vanishing Island's repercussions in Finland continued. Numerous associations and political parties arranged seminars about themes which the visit had spotlighted – such as questions of public and private morality. Many Swedes came to Finland to assist us.

One of them was James Dickson, a Member of Parliament,

Chamberlain to the Swedish King and landowner. He had participated as a volunteer in the Winter War in Lapland, under the slogan of "Finland's cause is our cause". Dickson had followed Finnish affairs closely ever since the war. He had an extraordinary capacity to live into what was happening and to find practical ways of assisting.

Dickson was of the opinion that God understood politics and economics and was able to give clear directives on such matters. At one point Finland tried to obtain a loan from the World Bank, but some big powers put on the brakes because of the political uncertainty. The Soviet Union had just withdrawn its ambassador to Finland and stopped trade negotiations so as to exert pressure on domestic and foreign policy. Concerned about the World Bank's decision, Dickson went to see the head of the Finnish state bank and then, at his own expense, to discuss the matter with a German Cabinet Minister in Bonn. This man talked to Chancellor Erhard – and the German representative at the World Bank was told to present Finland's case. The World Bank granted the loan.

Even though we had had a fair wind for most of *The Vanishing Island* campaign, there were those who began to attack our efforts. It was not difficult to find things that we had done wrong, but many of the rumours (for instance of CIA funding) were false.

As the Cold War got fiercer, the resistance to MRA's work in many Western countries grew. The threads often led back to Moscow where there was growing concern about the response MRA was receiving. MRA was often accused of being political and anti-Communist. This was not true but, of course, its inner core was diametrically opposed to the atheism and materialism on which Communism (and, indeed, Nazism in its day) built.

In 1956 Kekkonen took over from Paasikivi as President, and the country was paralyzed by a general strike. The Communists began to see their chance. Everything came to a standstill: the unploughed streets, covered with snow, held up the traffic. We did what we could towards a solution, drawing on the contacts we

had made through *The Vanishing Island* and working closely with Väinö Tanner, the grand old man of the cooperative and labour movement. Leading personalities from different parts of the country signed a powerful resolution calling for reconciliation, which was broadcast on the radio.

14. The prince and the cook

I spent most of 1956 outside Finland, and had not been home long when a letter from Paris dropped through the mailbox, asking me to come to Morocco as a member of an international group. The organiser wanted some participants from countries which were unburdened by a colonial past.

The background to the invitation was dramatic. All over Africa liberation movements were struggling for independence, and the battle was particularly hot in North Africa. The Algerians had taken up arms against the French, and tension in the neighbouring countries of Tunisia and Morocco had reached breaking point. The French ruled Morocco with an iron hand, supported by the Chief of the Berbers, the Pasha of Marrakech. The French had humiliated the true leader of Morocco, Sultan Mohammed V, and driven him into exile in Madagascar. Throughout the country the liberation movement was mobilizing.

Most French were locked in a master race attitude which they considered completely natural. Frank Buchman had recently visited Morocco with a group, at Robert Schuman's suggestion. One of the people they met was a French farmer, Pierre Chavanne from Marrakech, who could see that France's official policy was heading for disaster. He went to Caux and there began to realize that the attitude of French people themselves needed to change. When he got home he started building bridges, and found himself in contact with a young Moroccan engineer, a nationalist

who, unknown to Chavanne, had close links with the liberation movement.

The Moroccan began to see how hate had blinded him, and became involved in the process which led the Pasha to renounce his role as leader under the French and to demand the return of the Sultan as king of an independent Morocco – a call which averted a civil war. A photo appeared in the world press showing the Pasha on his knees before the Sultan, asking for forgiveness and recognizing the Sultan as Morocco's rightful ruler. Soon afterwards, the Pasha died and Mohammed V ascended the throne.

Now, knowing that peace was still fragile, Mohammed V wanted another MRA group to visit his country.

A couple of weeks after receiving the letter from Paris, I put my foot on African soil for the first time. The atmosphere, the smell, everything was different. I decided to feel at home and to leave behind any preconceived opinions.

We formed a colourful gang; a few Swiss, amongst them a kindhearted Dante specialist, Professor Theophil Spoerri; an Egyptian prince, Ismail Hassan, who had been exiled after Nasser's revolution; Gunnar Wieselgren from Sweden; and I from Finland. We rented a house on the outskirts of Rabat. As we had no official support and no pay, we lived on irregular voluntary contributions from friends at home and in other countries. Often we only just managed to get by financially.

The house soon became a hub of activity. One day we entertained 30 Berber warriors in their ankle-length robes and white turbans. Their leader had been *aide-de-camp* to the legendary Moroccan nationalist leader, Abdelkrim. We learnt that lunch guests could arrive six hours later than agreed – the day was what mattered to them. We had seminars, conferences, personal interviews, through which we received as much as we gave. A few times we were invited to meet the Sultan in the palace in Rabat and report on our experiences and impressions.

Ismail Hassan had once lived in luxury in Egypt. He was a

philosopher and poet, who took the blows of life with stoic equanimity and disarming humour. As a boy he and his brother had not played with toys, but with words. They invented a complete language which they called "optimisto" and still use it between themselves today, the only ones in the world who know it. Later Ismail took his doctorate at Zürich University on a new theory of music which he had developed.

Ismail had become involved in MRA as a young man through a Swiss living in Alexandria. Unhappy about living a life of luxury in the midst of poverty, he decided to donate a significant inheritance to support the work of Caux. His family criticized him violently. Soon after this Nasser came to power. Ismail's cousin, King Farouk, was exiled and all the family's property confiscated. Ismail's uncle told him, "You were the only one who did anything sensible with your money."

I often got impatient with Ismail, because he was so slow and impractical. But, in fact, everything he did was well thought through and therefore carried weight. With time, we became like brothers.

We travelled across Morocco in a dilapidated Citroën 2CV, to Fez, Meknes, Mogador, Marrakesh. In the south near the desert the temperature even at night was often over 40°C. Whatever the circumstances, Ismail stuck to his prayers five times a day. He would pull a small yellow plastic mat out of his briefcase, use a compass to establish the direction of Mecca, and pray with palms upwards as if ready to receive God's gifts.

Ismail believed that the first step towards unity between Christians and Muslims was for individuals to take their own faith seriously without adjusting it to serve their own ends.

Taibi Abdelkader was secretary of the building workers of Morocco. He often invited Ismail, Gunnar and me to trade union gatherings. Taibi had managed to unite warring factions inside his movement and his services were asked for by many quarters.

One day he invited Gunnar and me to accompany him to his hometown of Tetouan, 700 kilometres north in former Spanish

Morocco, for his sister's wedding. He arranged accommodation for us in a house for travelling merchants in the medina, the Arab inner city. Small winding alleys surrounded the house, countless tradesmen sat on the streets, the air was saturated with Arab music and the smell of animals, earth and donkey urine.

We spent the whole first day visiting Taibi's older relatives, aunts, uncles, cousins. With great care he asked each one how they were doing, and enquired about their health and needs. This was his traditional duty and the way in which society functioned without state welfare provision. His 82-year-old father, Abdelkader, lived in the centre of an extended family of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Abdelkader's own youngest child had just turned two.

Then the wedding came. A rich merchant had lent his mansion to the bride and her groom, a craftsman. A large balcony ran along the inner walls of the biggest room. The house swarmed with nearly 400 guests. In the centre of the main hall a group of elderly men dressed in white, ankle-length robes moved around with great dignity. A musician played Arabic folk music uninterruptedly. A singer, who had once performed for the Sultan, sang with operatic intensity. Young men passed round oriental delicacies, almond-milk and pastries.

Gunnar and I sat on a bench on either side of a soft-spoken Moroccan who only spoke Arabic. We asked Taibi discreetly whether he knew who this was. "That is the bridegroom, you have the seats of honour," he replied. There was not a single woman down in the hall, but they lined the edge of the balcony, their eyes glittering above their veils. Taibi pointed at a face, which seemed no different from the rest. "That is the bride, my sister!"

The celebrations continued till three in the morning. Four strong men now stepped forward, carrying a narrow basket attached to two rods and equipped with a small lid. They climbed up to the balcony, placed the bride in the narrow basket and closed the lid. As they carried her down the steps, the party broke up.

Led by a musician and the bridal basket, a long procession started to move through the jet-black night. A necklace of oil lamps wound along the narrow alleys. Finally the procession reached the mosque and the carriers hit the basket-rods three times against the door. The imam gave his blessing and the procession continued to the future home of the bride, where the lid was opened and the bridegroom carried her into the house. From this moment on, Taibi told us, the new husband was financially responsible not only for his wife but also for twelve other relatives. The bridegroom, who was exuberantly happy, seemed to have no problems with this.

Ibrahim, our cook at the house in Rabat, could neither read nor write. He had previously been occasionally employed by some Europeans. In the beginning he found it hard to accept menu suggestions from the two Swiss women in our household. Gradually, as we became friends, Ibrahim began to understand what we were doing and the women learnt how to present their suggestions tactfully.

That year the fast of Ramadan fell at the hottest time. For a month, from the moment in the morning when Ibrahim could distinguish a black thread from a white one, through till the evening, when this was no longer possible, he could neither eat nor drink. But he still had to work. He never compromised, even though he spent the day in the kitchen with all the tempting smells of the food. Ramadan to him meant never forgetting how the starving feel.

One day we realized that Ibrahim and his wife and two small children lived in a damp hovel with a leaking roof and a minimal opening for daylight. The two children were in danger of becoming permanent invalids. Ismail asked me to come along to the local Sheikh to try to get them another home. Ismail presented the case eloquently, stressing the bridge-building work between Arabs and Europeans which Ibrahim was doing. With thousands living in bidonvilles, ramshackle dwellings built out of cardboard, cans and sacks, Ibrahim's chances of finding a new home

were not great. So his joy was unbounded when one month later he got the message that he could rent a small home in a suburban block. Ismail had not indicated even the smallest personal "compensation" for the Sheikh.

The work we had planned to do was now approaching its end. Gunnar's mother had died and he was soon to marry, so he returned to Sweden. Most of the others also had to leave, but Ismail and I stayed behind with our faithful small Citroën.

As time passed, most of the contributions dried up and we saw no way of keeping the house and paying Ibrahim's salary. The situation was bizarre: we appeared to be prosperous foreigners but in fact we were desperately short of money.

We prayed to God to have mercy on us in our situation. One day a woman who had just moved into the neighbourhood came to ask us whether we had a bed we could sell her. We had one which was not borrowed, so we sold this and bought cheap macaroni. A shop gave us canned fish which was not rotten but unfit for sale. And unexpectedly we received just enough money, from Swedish Lapland, to pay Ibrahim's salary.

As usual, Ibrahim came each morning to ask what we wanted to eat that day. "Yesterday you made such good fish with macaroni, that we would love to have it again," we answered. Ibrahim looked at us with mild, knowing eyes. "I understand more than you realize. You are not like other foreigners. I do know how you live."

The inevitable day came when we left the house and Ibrahim lost his job. Our hearts ached when we had to give him notice and he was unemployed once again. But Ibrahim simply said, "I understand well, and Allah will now take care of me and my family again."

The day we moved out Ibrahim invited us to his home for a farewell dinner. We sat on the floor at the low table enjoying all the finest delicacies Morocco could offer, prepared by his wife. Later we heard that the meal had cost half the money the family still had left.

Some years later, when I was doing similar work with a group

in the Pacific Northwest of the USA, a money remittance arrived out of the blue from two elderly ladies in Los Angeles who knew that our accounts did not always show a plus. I was overjoyed, and immediately thought of all our needs. But the next morning before dawn a clear thought came to me, "Send the whole sum to Ibrahim in Morocco."

I walked thoughtfully to the bank. What if we shared it? Half the sum would make a big difference to Ibrahim! The temptation was strong. But the message had been unambiguous, so I sent a postal order for the whole amount. Some months passed. Then one day a letter arrived from Morocco, to say that Ibrahim had received the money just as the time limit for over a year of unpaid rent had expired and the family was about to be evicted. The sum corresponded exactly to his debt.

I kept in touch with Ibrahim over the years. Eventually, after his wife died, he emigrated to Denmark, where he got a job washing up in a pub. He was later joined by his son, Abdesslam, who married a Danish girl.

More than 30 years after our first meeting, Ibrahim and his family invited my wife and me to a Moroccan supper during a visit to Denmark. During the course of the evening Abdesslam told us how he had gradually lost the spiritual foundations he had learnt at home and adopted a European lifestyle. He had started drinking heavily. But his old father continued to pray five times a day, fast during Ramadan and abstain from alcohol. One day this hit Abdesslam's conscience and he decided to make a U-turn. His Christian wife was overjoyed.

Ibrahim himself told us that he had decided to return to Morocco. "Allah has helped me to become free from all fear of people, particularly since my pilgrimage to Mecca," he said. "I am no longer concerned about what others think of me." His son added that a great number of immigrant Moslems came to see his father for advice. "I feel that my time here on earth is approaching an end," Ibrahim continued. "My wife died in Morocco. I want to go home to my country and my daughter. I do not want to be a burden to others here. I believe I will be able to manage

in Rabat with the money I have saved here in Denmark."

In the autumn of 1957, Ismail and I were still on our own in Rabat. We knew a learned Algerian writer, Mahmoud, who lived with his family in the countryside outside Marrakech near the Atlas mountains. Mahmoud had been prominent in the Algerian nationalist movement, which was fighting for independence, and had come to Morocco after being imprisoned and tortured by the French. But he was free of bitterness towards the French. We often made long journeys together in the Citroën. Mahmoud usually sat in the front completely engrossed in the big Koran open on his knee, indifferent to the landscape passing by.

As an experienced journalist, former chief editor and highly respected spiritual leader Mahmoud was considered a potential political opponent by the other faction of the liberation movement when the war against the French came to an end. They also knew that he had been to Caux and was working to unite the different factions amongst his people.

One morning Mahmoud's family phoned in great agitation to say that he had disappeared. He had been called out to a neighbour's telephone at night and had not returned. We jumped into the car and drove the 400 kilometres to Marrakech in one stretch. There was no trace of him.

Some months later we learnt what had happened that night. On the way to his neighbour's telephone, Mahmoud had been kidnapped. The first day he was locked up in an empty farm and later moved to a prison in Oujda.

After six months, thanks to the help of fellow-prisoners, Mahmoud escaped. He managed to get to Casablanca and sought out some friends in the city centre. To their consternation their acquaintances had in the meantime changed sides and joined the other faction. Eventually Mahmoud succeeded in joining friends who had contacts in the administration in Rabat and got protection.

My Muslim friends broke down the prejudices against Islam

which I had shared with so many Christians. There are fanatical Muslims but there are also fanatical Christians, who refuse to enter into dialogue with Muslims. "The way Europeans live speaks so loud that we cannot hear what they say," an African once said to me.

In Marrakech I met an English missionary who had a small church in a cellar in the medina. His father had worked there for 40 years before him and had not converted a single Muslim. But when a bloody persecution broke out, some 100 Arabs risked their lives to save the missionary.

Over twenty years later Pope John Paul II made his first journey to Africa and spoke in Casablanca to thousands of students. I read his speeches because I was curious to know how he approached Muslim, Protestant and Marxist countries. I was struck by how he came to each country as a guest, with respect for what the country represented. First of all he sought what united – in Muslim countries, faith in one God; in Marxist countries, the vision of a just society – and showed where common action was possible. Finally he stated his own faith and his task as servant of Christ and shepherd of the Catholic Church. He did not play down his own faith, but showed that we can each be exactly what we are, when our heart is open to others and when we approach them without the slightest demand.

During my last two months I was the only remaining member of our original group. I stayed in Marrakesh with the Chavanne family and learnt to be prepared for the unexpected. At one point I found myself playing nanny to the three children, while their parents were away. The youngest was still in nappies. After the evening meal, the children would jump onto the sofa, shouting, 'Stories!' I tried to mobilize all I had heard as a child. Topelius' story about the birch tree and the star was their favourite: it told how an orphan brother and sister fled alone from Siberia back to Finland.

15. Chiefs and Alaskans

In the summer of 1959 I had the chance to go to North America. Some Finnish politicians had decided to participate in a conference which Buchman had called at Mackinac Island in the Great Lakes. I went along as interpreter and then stayed on. A journey of a few weeks finally turned into two full years.

It was an unsettling but healthy experience. Like so many others from the Nordic countries I had unconsciously developed an arrogant attitude to Americans. I saw them as superficial and boastful, with their filmstar evangelists competing for souls. They had little interest in literature, and then there was the race conflict. It was the easiest thing in the world to find proof for my set opinions every day.

After a few months, it struck me that I was an ass. I was in this mighty land, incapable of learning anything new because I already knew everything. I decided to put aside all that I had felt and thought about the United States and be ready to experience both the best and the worst.

There was the racial problem, the misery, the worship of dollars, but there was also a readiness to take risks which we in the Scandinavian countries with our fixation on security had much to learn from. I told a Swede about an American who had invested all his money, reputation and security in a business idea and succeeded. "With the resources they have, that's nothing," the Swede sniped back. "At the outset he didn't have as much money as you

do," I answered.

There were also the Native Americans who over the years had become the bad conscience of the white administration. The whites tried to smooth over the wrongs of the past with dollars, but the problem lay deeper. Money could not heal the hopelessness and lack of vision caused by dispossession. Alcoholism was rife.

Many tribes were represented at the conference on Mackinac Island. I made friends with one family. The wife was worried because her husband sat motionless by the great lake, day in, day out, watching the horizon and missing the conference. Could I entice him away from the beach? she asked.

One morning we had breakfast together. I asked him what he most of all wanted for his son. "War," he answered briefly. In an attempt to move the discussion, I wondered whether he meant war against all that was unjust in the world and that had led to the degradation of his people. He shook his head without changing his expression. "I took part in the Second World War. I took part in the Korean War. War is great." He meant that war tests a man's quality. For him, his people's greatness lay in the past.

Other Native Americans had overcome resignation. Over a period of nearly ten years, Chief Walking Buffalo of the Stoney Indians of Canada took part in several MRA campaigns both in North America and Europe in which I was also involved. Part of his ceremonial outfit was a headdress with two huge buffalo-horns. At 96 he could still shoot a head of game from a horse, without spectacles.

A few years before he died I spent an evening with him in Dortmund in Germany, together with some other friends. He wanted to share with us some of the things he had learnt in life. "I do not want to insult anybody," he said, "but the whites have led the world into darkness and have forced their laws and regulations on people everywhere."

He was free from blame and self-pity – he believed that his people also needed to live differently. "During my travels I saw that I was a sinner," he said. "I believed that I had set a good

example, but I started to realize that I was a hypocrite. But God gave me an understanding of spiritual power. We have a shortage of that, we human beings. We have never really used it. Wherever we are, whatever we see of His creation we must follow God. All fear, confusion and all worries then disappear from our minds. This I want to leave with you."

The quality of his faith illustrated the best of North America to me.

In late autumn 1959, I was sitting beside Mikko Asunta, a farmer, poet and Member of Parliament from Central Finland, in a small three-passenger Piper aircraft en route from Mackinac Island to Washington. A storm had hindered the flight of the regular plane, and so we had accepted an offer from a local pilot. The plane flew very close to the ground, up and down over the hills, jolting violently. I was soon ash-grey and diligently using the air sickness bags.

Asunta seemed completely unperturbed. He took an enthusiastic interest in the number of cows on the farms below. As it got dark, the pilot lost his way and the petrol began to run out. By now Asunta must also have realized that the situation was somewhat precarious. In a deep bass voice he started to sing a Finnish hymn, "Master, the storm is hard, the waves are mighty, the sky is black, can anything save us now?" "I used to sing this song in the Winter War when things were going really badly," he said.

Asunta was the archetypal Finnish farmer, stubborn and reliable whichever way the wind blew. During the war, with the help of just one comrade, he had saved his battalion at a moment of crisis. In one go he had been promoted to officer.

Pauli Snellman and I had met Asunta in the Finnish Parliament some years earlier and had invited him to go to Caux. Asunta had only attended three years of primary school and he suffered from feelings of inferiority, especially in the presence of academics and self-assured foreigners. At Caux it had struck him that real wisdom in political life was not based primarily on IQ and examinations. He began to see that he had something to contribute

which no one else could. One result of his new confidence was that although he was the only "uneducated" member of the Conservative group in parliament, he ended up as its chairman.

Whether Asunta was wise in diplomatic terms was perhaps another matter. When he opposed the invitation of Krushchev to the Nordic countries, there was a commotion in the Finnish press and the biggest Communist daily printed a cartoon on its editorial page showing Asunta as a big bull, snorting steam.

Asunta was an excellent ambassador for his country. After the conference in Mackinac we travelled for many weeks to numerous cities on the East coast. Everywhere we were asked, "Is Finland still a free country?"

During the Mackinac conference one of the English participants, Roger Hicks, wrote a "manifesto" called *Ideology and Coexistence,* which attempted to clarify the issues underlying the Cold War for Americans. It focussed on values and challenged the self-satisfied materialism and blindness of North America and the free world. The ultimate choice, Hicks maintained, was not between political systems but between those who were for and against God in every society. People who only lived for themselves and their own success, he maintained, could always be used by political militants with wider aims.

It was the period when Khrushchev banged his shoe on the table in the UN in New York and threatened that one day the Soviets would bury the Americans. The picture the Americans had of the world tended to be schematic: the evil of Communism versus the freedom of America. And they were not always too scrupulous about their means of promoting democracy.

Hicks' manifesto was published and a group of Americans decided to try to get it to every home in North America. Groups in Europe, Japan and Australia followed suit in their own countries, Finland too. Within a year, 88 million homes had received the booklet. In the US, the project helped to draw attention to the fact that the true danger was materialism rather than Communism. But in Europe, not least in Finland, it became

apparent that the message should have been worded differently.

As I came from a country that had some experience of Communism, the Americans asked me to take part in the action surrounding the booklet. I went first to the steel city of Pittsburgh, with some hundred others. We presented an industrial play, and the booklet went simultaneously to every home in the district. Then I went to Newfoundland to help coordinate the action in Canada, moving westwards from the east. We received extensive press coverage – and some violent opposition. The ideological climate in Canada was harder than in the US and the class struggle was bitter in many industrial areas.

The next summer I returned to Mackinac Island with some Canadian business executives and workers. There I made friends with Stan Allen, a businessman from Los Angeles, who had worked for a long time at Boeing in Seattle, but then fallen foul of the management. One day he told me that he realized that he had acted wrongly towards one of the top executives in particular. "Would you come and support me in sorting out the muddle I have caused?" he asked. "I'll pay for your ticket. I want to make a clean start." My task in Canada was completed, so I said yes.

A few days later we walked into the office of the executive concerned at Boeing headquarters in Seattle. Stan swallowed twice and simply asked forgiveness for the trouble he had caused. He was relieved, nearly joyous, when we left the office. He felt that a new phase had started in his life, and that he could now devote himself with fresh enthusiasm to the lemon farm which he had bought in California.

I stayed on in Seattle, a dynamic city with a powerful Nordic, particularly Norwegian, element. On the fishing vessels in the port you could hear Norwegian spoken everywhere. My hosts included Arne Gelotte, a Boeing engineer of Swedish descent. I stayed with a retired insurance man, Herbie Allen, and his small lively wife, Dot, in a somewhat dilapidated house which had been given to us as a base for our work.

One day Arne came to see us. "We have to get the manifesto to every home in Oregon, Washington State and Alaska," he said.

"Will you come with me and take on the operation?" He added, "I don't know how we will finance it. But I'll throw in a month's salary to get the ball rolling." Although we lived and worked in the US, the people who helped us were rarely rich. A music teacher in Portland, Oregon, gave an inheritance, a car dealer a second-hand car. Herbie emptied all his savings. The widow of the first postwar US ambassador to Finland also helped.

The response to the booklet in Washington State was strong. Some thousand wrote in asking for more information. Amongst them was John Sayre, an oarsman who had won a gold medal at the Rome Olympics. He was a sports icon, the model of the successful, admired American. But behind the facade his marriage was on the rocks.

I met John nearly every day. One day he told about the misery at home, what he had done during the "unofficial" part of the Olympic programme, and all that he had hidden in the hopes that his wife would not suspect anything. But of course she did: neither in America nor anywhere else can you fool a woman in such things. One day we had a time of quiet together. John had a clear thought to tell his wife everything without any "filtering", and to ask her to forgive him. That was the first step, and his marriage has held to this day.

John became convinced that he and his three gold-medalist team-mates should set a new tone for the youth of America. Rusty, Dan and Ted were also colourful characters. A Norwegian colleague and I met up with them several times a week and we took long trips together into the wilderness.

Within half a year the four had been welded together into a new kind of team. I went with them to an event held in the big 20th Century Fox theatre in San Francisco. A buzz went through the hall when, at the end of the evening, the four tall men walked onto the stage and spoke about their convictions for America. It created a sensation when John and Rusty and their wives later decided to make a break in their careers and give all their time to MRA.

The date for the mailing of the booklet in Alaska was now settled. We had no support group in the state and few contacts, so, as Arne had a brother in a remote town in Alaska, he and I were asked to go there by the coordinating group in New York. Arne could just manage to cover his own ticket, but I had scarcely any money.

We tried to find a contact person to give us a foothold in the biggest city, Anchorage. A friend remembered the name of a banker who had attended an MRA reception many years ago. If we could find him, that would be a start. We decided to order tickets to Anchorage and prayed every day that God would open a door and give the money we needed. The evening before our departure I was mowing the lawn, when an old lady drove into our yard. "I was in the neighbourhood and was so eager to know what you are doing just now," she said. I told her some news and mentioned that Arne and I were going to Alaska next day, but I said nothing about finances. "Do you have money for the trip?" she asked suddenly. "So far for one of us," I answered. "Let me pay for the other!" she said.

Next day we flew over the majestic Yukon territory, which I had read about as a boy in Jack London's books. That evening we searched the phone book in our cheap hotel and found the name of the man we had heard about. "I could drop in at once," he said. He turned out to be Vice-President of the Matanuska Valley Bank. He did not interrupt once as we told him why we had come. He was quiet a while and then said, "When shall we start? How about eight in the morning?"

Our new friend took us straight to the chief editors of the two biggest newspapers, to the TV and to various business executives. In the street we ran into a jovial character dressed in a checked flannel shirt and heavy boots, strolling along at his leisure. He could have been a goldminer had he lived 100 years earlier. "Tell my friend why you are here," the banker said. "Who was he?" we asked as we walked on. "Did I forget to tell you? That was the President of the Alaskan Supreme Court."

Next the banker asked us to go to Fairbanks in Central Alaska and get things started there. The city is built on permanently frozen land, with the majestic Mount McKinley, America's highest mountain, on the horizon. The banker had arranged all our contacts. The daily paper interviewed us and printed our photograph on the front page. The article finished up with the information that I, a "politically marked man", was returning to Finland "behind the Iron Curtain". I had clearly not managed to convince the editor about Finnish democracy.

The President of Fairbanks University invited us for lunch. He was immensely proud of being head of "the most northern university of the world". I remarked that Finland might beat the record. "It's impossible," he said. "Let us look at the map." When I pointed out the location of Oulu University, his face darkened with disappointment. Why did I stress such a stupid detail just to be right, I scolded myself afterwards.

The banker also arranged for us to visit the remote, small capital, Juneau. No road went there. Right on the city border there was a mighty glacier. Everywhere you could see the traces of closed-down goldmines. The Governor of Alaska, William Egan, received us warmly. He told us that Finland had contributed two governors to Alaska 150 years ago, at a time when we both belonged to the Russian Empire. In 1793 a group of monks led by Archimandrite Josaf Bolotov had come from the Valamo and Konevitsa monasteries in Lake Ladoga and founded a church in Alaska. Within a year 7,000 people had been baptized in the Kodiak Islands. One tenth of the inhabitants of Alaska were now Orthodox, most of them Inuit. A Finn had also built the first Lutheran chapel in Alaska.

Some days later we flew back south through the night over Yukon. The weather was clear. Down below total darkness reigned: we only saw one small light in an hour. Life had not changed much down there since Jack London's times.

My tasks sent me up and down between Quebec and Miami, Fairbanks and San Diego. One day Dot phoned me in Southern

Oregon from her home in Seattle. Herbie had unexpectedly died of a heart attack. Their son was in Italy, and could not return, so could I come and help to arrange the funeral?

Before the funeral a telegram arrived from two elderly ladies in Los Angeles, asking me to buy flowers for what seemed a outrageous sum. But I told myself that I was in America where one thinks big. The shop-keeper looked somewhat surprised at the sum I mentioned, but she promised to send the flowers direct to the funeral home. On the day of the funeral there at the foot of the coffin was a gigantic, man-sized flower arrangement. A few weeks later the ladies sent the cash for the flowers, exactly one tenth of the sum in the telegram. The telegraph company had been generous enough to add an extra zero.

After the ceremony a colourful group of guests came to Dot's home for the evening. Maybe Dot would want us to sing some Methodist hymns after coffee, I thought. But not at all. "Tonight I think we shall sing the tunes that Herbie loved most," she suggested. And they all started singing Country and Western songs to my miserable accompaniment. Herbie had been a good listener, with an extraordinary love for people, and many of the guests described how meeting him had made them long to find a faith that lasted. The memorial would certainly have shocked many in my country, but I have rarely experienced an atmosphere like the one that night.

16. The heat is on

The situation was not easy in Finland at the end of the Fifties. The Soviet Union tried to influence our domestic and foreign politics, while we tried to hold on to our neutrality. After the war we had signed a pact of mutual friendship and assistance with the Soviet Union, with a military clause which was dangerously open to different interpretations. No wonder that the West often expressed reservations about Finland's true freedom.

Both Paasikivi and Kekkonen, who succeeded him as President, based their policy on the reality of our 1,500 kilometre border with the Soviet Union and the cold fact if there was a conflict we could expect no support from the West. In 1944 when Paasikivi signed the armistice in Moscow he met Marshall Timoshenko, Soviet commander of the Karelian army. Timoshenko remarked that Finland had had the best army in the world during the war. Paasikivi retorted that it was great they both shared the same opinion. "But it had one fault," added Timoshenko, "it was too small!"

Kekkonen shrewdly manoeuvred Finland through the dangerous pitfalls, seeking a difficult balance between maintaining good relations with the Soviet Union and upholding our independence and commitment to democratic ideals. A black-and-white policy would have been catastrophic. But at the same time Kekkonen easily misused his power, fostering servility around him. The contrast between his style of leadership and Paasikivi's

was striking.

In this sensitive situation, the decision to join in a united Nordic initiative and send *Ideology and Coexistence* to every home in Finland was daring. By so doing, we demonstrated that we were not part of the Soviet bloc. But it was not surprising that it led to an uproar. The fact that the booklet went out so widely and so quickly, and on the same day in all the Nordic countries, made Moscow sit up. They were obviously worried by any united ideological initiative coming from the West.

The echoes soon reached me abroad. The Soviet Embassy in Helsinki reacted violently, claiming that the distribution of the booklet was an "unfriendly" act against the Soviet Union. The issue was discussed in Cabinet. A press photo showed Prime Minister Sukselainen sitting at a shining table with *Ideology and Coexistence* lying in the middle of it and a sinister-looking delegation from the Finnish-Soviet Friendship Federation in attendance. There were plans to start legal proceedings against the MRA foundation in Finland which Sukselainen, who had once visited Caux, managed to ward off.

Väinö Tanner, the doyen of the Finnish cooperative movement, had helped the group who set up the campaign, and the booklet was printed by the printing press owned by the labour movement. Tanner had belonged to Finland's wartime Cabinet and served years of hard labour after the war. He was unperturbed by the hullabaloo.

The fresco painter Lennart Segerstråle, who was then chairman of the MRA foundation in Finland, had earlier expressed strong doubts about the action, on the grounds of Finland's isolated political situation. He also felt that the pamphlet was superficial – it stressed the materialism of Communism more strongly than that of the welfare state and pointed more to political choices than to deeper spiritual ones. He felt the manifesto was dictated more by fear of Communism than a passion to answer materialism in all its forms.

Today it is obvious that Segerstråle's concerns were justified. The booklet quoted a statement of an American admiral, "the

choice for America is moral re-armament or communism". This was not meant to suggest a choice between two organizations, MRA and the Communist Party, but between two ways of life. But it was easy to misunderstand – particularly as the booklet gave considerable space to alerting the reader to the strategies and tactics of Communism.

At the same time, Segerstråle was aware that we in Finland could easily lose our perception of the borderline between right and wrong in our desire to be left in peace by our Eastern neighbour. Some made no distinction between Western democracy and Eastern totalitarianism. They maintained that the USA was the biggest menace to peace.

So, after some hesitation, Segerstråle finally decided not to oppose the publication of *Ideology and Coexistence* in Finland. When the row broke out, Segerstråle took public responsibility and defended the campaign. The President stopped the award he was on the point of receiving for his artistic achievements.

Soon I was back in Finland, working closely with Lennart Segerstråle. These were difficult years for him. He had to bear much misunderstanding and his intentions were often misinterpreted. He taught me what it means to put one's country and other people before one's own security and reputation.

I had known Lennart since my student days and had often watched him working on his great church frescos. Once I visited the church in Varkaus in East Finland which was being rebuilt after its wartime destruction. Lennart was working on the altar fresco, 240 square metres in size, as high as a four storey house. He used a scaffold on railway tracks to move back and forth along the wall. He had just interrupted his work up near the ceiling and was talking with a woman, who had come to ask for personal help.

Usually the door is kept closed when an artist is working in a church, but Lennart wanted his work to be a part of the city's life as it used to be in ancient Italy. If work on a fresco is interrupted even for a few hours, the whole section has to be redone – but he

was prepared to risk that, if someone like this woman needed him. Forty years later, old people in Varkaus still tell how Lennart's work created a new spirit in the city and helped resolve the bitterness between the classes.

Maybe it was understandable that some of those close to Lennart felt that his Christian commitment stole too much of his time: "Imagine what he could do if he devoted himself completely to art!" Lennart once told me that these critics did not grasp what was the deepest well of his inspiration. There was in Lennart a selflessness that made people want to work with him, something quite different from the drive for self-realization.

Lennart and his son, Ulf, had attended an Oxford Group conference in Aulanko in January 1939. It had been a turning point for both of them. Ulf, whose talent was possibly even greater than Lennart's, was killed on the Karelian isthmus on the same day as I was taken to the first aid station. His son's short but remarkable life of faith challenged Lennart for the rest of his life never to compromise on his convictions. He had a lot of sorrow to cope with, for his second son tragically drowned.

At Aulanko, many old antagonists from Finland's civil war had been reconciled. It created quite a stir and helped to weld the country together before the forthcoming showdown. When Segerstråle painted his fresco in the dining room at Caux, he said it was in gratitude for what the Oxford Group and MRA had done for Finland.

Segerstråle also gave generously to other MRA initiatives. In the late Fifties, for instance, he gave his entire fee for a large painting in Lapland – nearly half a year's income – to a group of Kenyans, who were raising the money to dub the film, *Freedom,* into Swahili. *Freedom,* written and acted by Africans, dealt with the struggle for independence from the colonial powers and also for freedom from bitterness and revenge. On the urging of Jomo Kenyatta, later the first President of Kenya, the film was shown throughout Kenya on the eve of independence. When I visited Kenya in 1991, a former Mau Mau guerrilla, who had been involved in the dubbing, asked me to take a letter of thanks to

Segerstråle's family for his contribution 'to stopping a wave of violence' in his country.

In the late summer of 1961, soon after my return to Europe, Frank Buchman died in the small town of Freudenstadt in the Black Forest. It was here that in 1938 he had received the insight that there was only one realistic alternative to the military armament which was leading towards a second world war – a radical mobilization of humanity's moral and spiritual resources with the aim of reshaping society.

Frank Buchman's death was not unexpected. He was weak and had just reached the age of 83. Even so it was a blow. Although one did not want to put him on a pedestal he was nevertheless the initiator and central figure of a great expanding work. Buchman was something of an artist. He seldom spoke at meetings, but lived into what others could give, in all their many-sidedness. His own experience of God's transforming power had given him a strong expectancy of what could happen through other people, when the same power got a chance to work in them. He had a sense of adventure that was catching. He did not try to manipulate people or tie them to himself.

After the Second World War, when Frank Buchman was working for unity between the Germans and the French, he pointed to "the full message of Jesus Christ" as the foundation. To him Christ was a gift to all humanity. Christ did not come into the world to procure new names for a membership list. The calling Frank Buchman had received "to remake the world" was a task for people of all faiths, beyond the grasp or control of us Christians.

Buchman had hoped that after his death a group of people would take over the leadership of MRA. But the movement was still relatively young and there was not yet a group which could take on overall responsibility. So it was fortunate that Peter Howard was able to pick up the reins. But Howard himself died unexpectedly in Peru four years later. This was to result in great difficulties for the world work of MRA.

Before his death Frank Buchman had agreed with General HoYing-Chin of Taiwan, former Prime Minister of China and Commander-in-Chief of Chiang Kai-shek's army, to receive some hundred Chinese students for training in teamwork. The idea was that they would travel around Europe, staging their play, *The Dragon,* and learn from their experiences as they went.

As the young Chinese travelled from city to city they encountered considerable opposition, particularly in Denmark and Norway. In the political climate of the time, many European politicians saw Taiwan as an embarrassment. They did not want to provoke China's anger by getting too close to the small state which had seceded from it.

The show itself was a better expression of its actors' nationalism than of an answer to materialism, and the young Chinese seemed more concerned with getting allies for Taiwan than with learning new things in their own lives.

It was clear that it would be unwise to invite the Chinese to Finland, given the prevailing state of affairs. Pauli and I had a clash in Bonn with one of the British hosts of the Chinese, who tried to bully us into inviting the whole delegation. He may have been worried about how to fill their programme. He branded our hesitation as appeasing the Russians, and only calmed down when the British Foreign Ministry also advised against the exercise. As a compromise Pauli and I booked four charter planes to take Finns to the showings in Stockholm City Hall, and many from our parliament travelled there.

In hindsight, the episode in Bonn can be seen as a sign that all was not as it should be amongst some of those who had belonged to the circle around Buchman. When inner uncertainty takes over, human control always lies in wait.

When *The Dragon* reached Denmark, the last leg of its Nordic tour, the cast marched in a mighty parade through the centre of Copenhagen. One of the veterans of the Social Democratic party led the way followed by the standard bearers. I carried the Finnish flag. Then followed a giant, plastic dragon in poison green, winding its way along the streets.

If in those times you wanted to pursue spiritual and moral objectives without harassment, it was advisable to present your message meekly within the walls of a church. The play had barely arrived in Denmark when organised groups began to sabotage the shows, detonating stink-bombs and letting mice into the hall. The police were powerless. The Chinese were front page news. In the end, for their own protection, they had to be sent away quietly one early morning and the rest of the showings cancelled.

Soon I was back in Denmark, where the atmosphere was subdued. Our big campaign had fizzled out and seemed a fiasco, and we were pondering what to do next. Meanwhile, a group of young Scandinavians called an all-Nordic gathering in Sweden for the summer of 1962. Bengt Jonzon, the former Bishop of Swedish Lapland, took part. "I have never been at a conference where so many gave their life to God and decided to put their careers aside to go out with an answer to anarchy," he said afterwards.

During the conference a young Swede completed a play called *The Wind is Shifting,* which took a firm stand for moral values in contrast to that of many in the churches in the Sixties. Unstretchable moral standards, the playwright maintained, were the lifeblood of society. God had a plan for each nation as well as for each individual. Some 60 Scandinavians took the play more than 10,000 kilometres, from Kirkenes on the Arctic coast to southern Denmark, to Britain, Switzerland, Germany and Luxembourg.

Mainly young people took part but all ages were represented. My companion in Morocco, Gunnar Wieselgren, was there with his singer wife, Inga. Pertti Kajanne, an economist from Tampere who had travelled widely with MRA, also took part.

The oldest participant was Bengt Jonzon. When, after World War II, the Swedish Government appeased Moscow by deporting a large number of Baltic refugees to a harsh fate in the Soviet Union, Jonzon was the only church leader who spoke out against it. When he had first gone to Caux, his faith and devotion were

self-evident. What more could he possibly find there? An American churchman challenged him to think not so much for the church as for the nation. Jonzon took the point, and became a bridge-builder between church and the labour movement unlike any Swedish bishop before him.

Jonzon called Finland his "second homeland". As a young minister he had encountered the Finnish revival movement in Eastern Finland and discovered a foundation that lasted throughout his life. Jonzon visited Finland 62 times and not only spoke Finnish well but had mastered its most complicated grammatical constructions. Our former Prime Minister and head of the National Bank, Rainer von Fieandt, always carried a personal letter from Jonzon in his wallet. "It is a treasure," he used to say.

Although he had retired many years before, Jonzon was still a legend in Northern Scandinavia. He often preached at the outdoor services we arranged as *The Wind is Shifting* moved through the Arctic area, working on his sermons right through Saturday night.

When we reached northern Denmark I stayed in the home of the Thyssen family in Hjörring. The father, Johannes, was chief physician in the city hospital. He was a skilled surgeon and during the Winter War had volunteered for service on the Karelian isthmus. During the preceding weeks a knee injury from the war had been tormenting me. Thyssen discovered that I needed an operation, if I was not to lose the use of my leg. He offered to do the whole thing free of charge.

I had just stopped using a stick, when my father sent a telegram asking me to come to Finland as soon as possible. Mother was seriously ill and there was no hope of her recovery. To my grief I reached the hospital 25 minutes after she had passed away. She had been bed-ridden for many years, but had untiringly followed all my travels. While I was in Morocco she had prayed every day for the Sultan, for the people we met and for the future of the country. She herself had never travelled beyond the borders of Scandinavia. She demonstrated that a true Christian world com-

mitment has nothing to do with how much you travel, and everything to do with what you choose to live for.

Standing there alone at Mother's bed I gave thanks for her life and for the legacy of faith she had given us. She gave without calculation. I could see her sitting at her desk long after midnight just before Christmas, ill and worn-out. Father scolded her again and again as she sat up packing Christmas magazines and writing greetings. "But I can't leave out the janitor's wife and the milk lady," she would say. There was room for everybody, the old people in the neighbourhood, her former Sunday School pupils in Vihti.

17. A Girl from Häme

I was now in my forties. My parents had sometimes worried that I was not married. Mother had prayed about it. My efforts so far had ended miserably. A few years earlier I had decided that if God did not give me a green light I would not try to manipulate things. I had such a roving life that it might be better to remain a bachelor. But one day as I walked along the Esplanade in Helsinki an unexpected thought hit me, "You are going to marry Aino." It was like an unambiguous telegram.

I had known Aino for many years. She came from Tampere in the province of Häme in central Finland, and like me she gave all her time to MRA's work. She had been working in New Zealand and Australia for the last four years. I had never thought seriously about her and had never been in love with her.

I knew that she was a devoted Christian, who had met the Oxford Group through Bishop Eelis Gulin, while he was Bishop of Tampere, and through her scripture teacher. When she decided to give up her nurse's training to travel with MRA, her parents, who had never had the chance to study, opposed her plans. Aino's old grandmother saw it differently. "If God wants Aino to go out, that is the only thing she can do."

Ten years had passed and Aino was now at the other side of the world. I have often experienced that a thought which really comes from God may disappear for a while, but it will come back, simple and clear, pushing doubts and worry away. If some-

thing is not right, a certain uneasiness remains and then it is not advisable to go ahead. When I had defied such an "inner brake" in the past it had led to troubles and disappointments. But the thought that Aino was my future life-companion steadily grew clearer during the following weeks and a love for her began to grow too.

But what should I do? I only knew that Aino was working with families in Australia's ports and mining districts. Should I write, phone, cable? One morning I had such a clear thought that I wrote it down, "Take your hands off and give God a chance to work it out in His way. Don't worry." Was this wise? Surely more than one man in Australia had cast his eye on this blond girl from Finland. What if I missed her by waiting? Could it be a virtue to be passive? But the thought I had received had been so clear. God seemed to want to test my faith. I decided to let go.

Not long afterwards I was back in Denmark, in Jutland. During one of our morning planning meetings a colleague came up to me and said, "We are getting reinforcements. There's been a telegram to say that Aino Poussa is on her way here from Australia after a few days of rest in Finland." I tried to look unaffected and answered neutrally, "That's interesting."

Things did not move as fast as I had imagined. Aino presumably needed time to acclimatize after all her years in the southern hemisphere. Meanwhile a Norwegian, Leif Hovelsen, asked me to accompany him as soon as possible to northern Norway to prepare for the tour of *The Wind is Shifting,* starting in Kirkenes at the Russian border. I shelved my marriage plans for a while.

The next months took us through the whole of Arctic Norway and then south to Oslo. I was preparing the way for the group, opening contacts with industry and the army. By the time the main force arrived in a city, I had often already left. But I noticed that Aino was not always happy. She did not quite fit in with the main group, being older than most of them. And she did not find her rightful place among the older ones, though she worked harder than many. She and Karin Andersson, a friend from Sweden, had

taken on cooking for the 60-person group in one new kitchen after the next, sometimes of the most primitive kind.

I asked myself why I felt this inner brake in relation to Aino. I confided in Bengt Jonzon who encouraged me not to hurry. It was important, he felt, that Aino found her own independent relationship with God, irrespective of what others thought of her.

When we finally arrived in Oslo, we had to get quickly to Caux in our Volkswagen buses. Peter Howard hoped that we would give a powerful contribution at the conferences there. That would presumably not be the best setting in which to pursue a romance.

Next, a group of Germans involved in industry and the church invited the play to visit a series of cities in southern Germany. Fine, I thought, I shall propose this autumn in Germany. I rejoiced at the thought. I had not said a word to Aino, but perhaps she guessed my intentions. I was eager too to continue working with these young people. They were becoming more steady in their faith, and we older ones were learning a lot too. The young people helped us not to be overcautious or locked in old moulds of working and ingrained patterns of thinking.

We were preparing to go to Germany when a letter reached me from Ismail Hassan, my Egyptian companion from the time in North Africa, asking me to travel with him immediately to Teheran. Ismail had told Peter Howard that he wanted to invite me, and Howard had given his support. I gave the matter serious consideration. I would have liked to work with Ismail, but at the same time I felt strongly that my task with the Nordic group was not yet completed. And the mission in Germany would be quite demanding.

I wrote to Howard that I felt I should continue working with the Scandinavians. He sent me a sulphurous reply. He pointed out the opportunities in Iran and mentioned my experience of the Muslim world. Then he added that he believed that the true reason for my refusal was that I was putting my marriage plans first: I had confided in him my interest in Aino.

Howard was a powerful personality, respected and often feared although he had a sensitive heart. I wondered whether I should

yield. Of course I was a free man. Nobody was forcing me to work with MRA: I could go back to Finland and get a job at any time. But I had said yes to a calling irrespective of what it implied. And maybe Howard could see perspectives which I could not. In teamwork between volunteers it is important to be free both to lead and to obey.

In the end I wrote to Howard that what he said about my marriage plans was not true, and that I was convinced that my place now was in Germany. But I added, "If in spite of this you still think that I should go to Iran I am willing to cancel my plans and travel with Ismail."

His reply arrived a few days later. He thanked me for the spirit of my letter and encouraged me to go to Germany and to propose to Aino when I knew the time was right. The letter was a great gift. Later I understood how much Howard wanted his colleagues to dare to stand by their own convictions. From that time onwards I was no longer cautious in Howard's company nor afraid of his sharp tongue. I felt that he was a comrade and a friend. The experience taught me that teamwork and independence did not conflict and helped me to stand firm in difficult decisions in the future.

On 6 December 1963, Finland's independence day, in the picturesque city of Heidenheim in southern Germany, I struck. "With my whole heart," Aino replied instantly. She sometimes felt simple, she had no university education and had long since written off marriage as self-evident. We celebrated our engagement in Heidenheim Castle. It was the cheapest dinner I had ever treated anyone to. Aino was still so dazed that she could not eat anything.

Aino told me about the inner battle she had gone through during the past months. She had felt that somehow she had reached zero point. There were no external rewards waiting for her – success, appreciation, marriage, material privileges. What ultimately did she want her life to be? In the end all that remained were Jesus' promises and His calling to which she had once given her yes. "Having this, I have all I need."

I told her how many times during the past year I had wondered whether it was the right time for me to propose. Aino said she was grateful that I had obeyed God and not rushed ahead. "It would have interrupted the battle I knew I had to fight through alone." It was another proof that in spite of my impatience God gives adequate instructions, not too early, but never too late.

Aino's family was anchored in the farming tradition of the people in Häme. Her father, Aaro Poussa, was one of twelve children. He had left farming and started a well-known real estate company. He had gone through many difficulties and, in the end, his alcoholism had ruined his finances and family life. One day, maybe inspired by Aino's choice, he decided that he had taken his last drop. With characteristic Häme stubborness he stood firm in the face of pressure from his business colleagues – and life became different for his family, especially his wife who had constantly had to suffer the humiliation of buying food on credit.

Before I had any idea of marrying Aino, I had once visited her home, as interpreter for Gottfried Anliker, a Swiss building contractor. A warm, light atmosphere met us at the door. Anliker told Aaro how he had revolutionized his firm after he had owned up to fiddling his taxes and decided to include his employees in the way he ran the business, and how his new policy, which rejected customary "flexible patterns", had gained respect.

Aaro listened transfixed for an hour. Then he got up from the table, gripped Anliker's hand and looked him straight in the eyes: "From now on this will also be my approach to economic matters." He said no more.

We soon discovered what he meant. The tax authorities were always suspicious of small businessmen and doctors and often charged arbitrary taxes, based on estimates. Like other entrepreneurs, Aino's father had taken devious steps to lighten his tax burden. Now he went to the tax authorities and told them that he had decided to be absolutely open in all his transactions. He gave them all his papers from past years and asked what he owed. The tax director was thunderstruck. Aaro then went straight to the

bank, took out a loan to cover the whole sum and paid his debt to the tax authorities in one go.

Soon the firm's books were in order for the first time in years. Several years later, just a few months before he died, Aaro told me, "It was the best financial decision of my life. When I no longer touched alcohol and became totally honest in business, I regained my self-respect."

We had a large wedding on 22.2 at 2 o'clock, and it was -22°C. It was conducted by Bishop Gulin and Bengt Jonzon.

Some weeks later we were back in Switzerland. Erich Peyer, one of the Swiss who had put much of what they owned into buying the old hotel at Caux, came and asked us to take on a special task. Switzerland had close to a million foreign workers of different nationalities. Relations between the Italian foreign workers and the host community were inflamed.

One of Peter Howard's plays, *Through the Garden Wall,* had been translated into Italian and was to be shown in areas with a large Italian population. "The question is, who will prepare the way," said Peyer. "We have made preliminary bookings at theatres in a dozen places, but we have done nothing about publicity or coordination. Would you take it on?"

We were lent an old Chevrolet, and an elderly German lady offered to be our secretary. We found a more unexpected ally in the Italian Communist Party, who, while in principle against what MRA stood for, were anxious to improve life for Italians in Switzerland. They had nothing against adding some festive lustre to their monotonous lives. We sat together with the Communist leaders in a smoke-filled out-of-the-way pub, coordinating our plans.

One day I went to meet Aino at the station after a day trying to persuade businessmen in a small town to buy theatre tickets for their Italian workers. Hundreds of Italians used to gather at the station after work and Aino would go there to distribute leaflets. An unparalleled hullabaloo met me. The Italians were swarming like ants around Aino, competing for the honour of escorting her to the theatre.

An evening at the theatre was a big event for the Italians, who would dress up in their finest and arrive in a festive mood. Nobody had ever done anything like this for them before, they said. They responded to the play's humour and depth. In a sense it was built on a sentence from St Paul's letter to the Ephesians, "For He is our peace, who hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" – the same words which Mother had found to be the key to reconciliation after the fateful events at Olkkala. I wondered what our Communist co-organizers were thinking about the contents of the play.

A couple of days later I visited the head of the Omega watch company. I tried my best to emphasize the importance of the play to the firm and to the country. The managing director interrupted and said, "I don't understand any of this! What is a Finnish engineer doing in Switzerland, tackling Italian problems?" I started from the beginning. In the evening there was a strong block of Italians from Omega in the audience.

The tumults of the Sixties swept across Europe and America. The war was raging in Vietnam. The USA was losing faith in its own excellence. Confusion ruled in the universities. In some church circles thinking seemed to be shaped by Gallup polls, while other Christians withdrew into their shells to keep their teaching pure and so opted out of the battle for society. Others, like the World Christian Student Federation, were divided by violent inner conflicts. As Secretary General of the organization, my cousin, Risto Lehtonen, often found himself in the line of fire. One of the candidates for his successor was an open Communist. The Catholic Church seemed to keep clearer contours.

Peter Howard had written many plays and books as "weapons" for those who wanted to fight openly for spiritual values. The Nordic young people's campaign with *The Wind is Shifting* had given him new ideas for the future, and he travelled all over the US speaking in the universities. Aino and I were in the midst of parallel actions in Europe. Large summer conferences for young people from all over the world took place in the US and some of

those who attended began to develop a musical revue.

In 1965 the shattering news reached us that Peter Howard had been taken ill and died in Lima, during a tour of Latin America. Looked at from a human point of view, his death was a tragedy for the work of MRA. Men and women on all continents were dedicated to the same aims as Buchman and he had stood for. But our fellowship at that point lacked the maturity to carry on without a charismatic leader of Howard's quality and experience.

The day after Howard's funeral in England we had a working meeting in London. I and others expected someone to step forward and suggest how to proceed – not so much new actions, but perhaps a few days' gathering when, in quiet and prayer, we could examine our foundations and seek clarity. Buchman had once initiated something similar at a critical period at the beginning of World War II. As things were now, no one suggested it.

Our work had always had an Anglo-Saxon character. It didn't occur to those of us from the North that anyone but an Anglo-Saxon could give leadership – and certainly no one from Scandinavia. We were all perplexed by Howard's untimely death. Looking back at myself and some of my Nordic friends, our attitude of course had little to do with humility.

So we left London and got on with some of the initiatives that Howard had launched. Young people's *Sing Out* shows started up on every continent. A new university was opened on Mackinac Island. But there were already signs of different views on how to proceed. In fact these differences had existed long before Howard's death, but his strong personality had kept us all together.

Some veterans were concerned that MRA's work might slide into something action-based and youth-centred at the expense of the inner fundamentals. Especially the British feared this shallowness, and there was definitely reason for concern. The young were self-assured and amongst the Americans, even some of the older ones, there was a strong faith in the supremacy of youth. There were grounds for caution – but fear caused blindness to the great things that also happened.

Behind "orthodoxy" there is often insecurity. People who are apt to give quick judgements often have a thin faith themselves. No one can mediate to others what does not live in his own heart. The tree can be judged by its fruit. What is genuine, has growing power. Control does not work for very long.

Later I understood that any spiritual movement, irrespective of the whole-heartedness of its members, is subject to the same laws of cooperation and the same dangers of division as any other organization. Many of those who should have been prepared to take more leadership had consciously or unconsciously accepted to be led by powerful personalities. So they were not prepared when Buchman and Howard died. If you give to other people the place that God alone should have in your life, wrong relationships soon arise. Many had ceased to think for themselves and had lost the courage of their own convictions.

The waves soon reached Scandinavia. In Finland Viljo Lampela's sons, Heikki and Matti, had developed a dynamic work with young people, and had built up a lively cross-border cooperation with other countries. The daily press was full of articles and the counter-forces did not conserve printing ink.

Wherever the two brothers and their friends went, young people cleaned up their lives and gave the reins to God. So Aino and I found it painful when what was happening in Finland was questioned by some former colleagues. Our cooperation with Sweden came to an end and this grieved us. We continued contacts with industry, church and parliament, but without the external support we had had in the past.

By and by a serious split developed, disrupting old bonds of friendship and patterns of teamwork. As I think back on those years I ask myself what lay beneath these friendships. Did we encourage inner freedom in each other? Were we true enough friends to speak up when something was wrong? I know today that I failed on this point. If you become too keen on results you easily get preoccupied by what others think about you, at the cost of your faith.

Our former Archbishop Martti Simojoki once touched on these questions in a letter he wrote to us during one action, "Expect great things from God. But take into consideration that God's power is fulfilled in weakness. Surrender your lives to be used by God, again and again. Remember that God takes earnestly the promises we have given to Him - and that is often painful."

Some young people in Scandinavia once asked me what I believed lay behind MRA's difficulties at the end of the Sixties. To put it simply, there was a gap between the great aims of our work and our own inner maturity. Human authority had become too important and we had not paid enough attention to our spiritual lives.

In retrospect I can see that the split may have been neccessary. Only a deep crisis could create the foundations we needed to embark on the tasks opened up by world events in the Nineties. In our personal lives God sometimes has to intervene with a hard hand when we have not wanted to follow the directives He has given. That holds true in every working fellowship. In the Thirties my parents' church went through a similar crisis.

By now Aino and I had a small daughter and my father was very ill. We began to think about whether I should return to a job in industry, after twenty years fulltime with MRA.

In spite of her inner strength Aino was very sensitive. The conflict had affected her health. In 1970, while I was away on a long journey, she was hit by a violent headache. She was eight months pregnant with our second child. She took a taxi to the hospital and asked for help. "Another of these hysterical pregnant women," hissed the emergency nurse and tried to send her away. Aino pleaded for help. The nurse took her blood pressure. It was alarming. Within a minute several doctors and nurses had gathered around her. In the examination room she could hear the heartbeat of the child in the loudspeaker. "Is there any hope for the baby?" she asked. "Rather ask if there is hope for yourself," one of the doctors said. Within two days the child had died, but it had to be born in the normal way, aided by hormone treatment.

Aino was sharing a room with six happy mothers.

I returned home not knowing what had happened. Calmly, but sadly, Aino told me in a matter-of-fact way what she had gone through. I grieved because we had eagerly hoped for more children. I tried to tell her that life must go on, but I did not grasp the depth of her sorrow and give her the support she needed. Later she told me how lonely she had felt. It was hard to hear. I knew all about the theory of helping people, yet I had been blind to the deepest need in the person closest to me.

I should now have applied for a job. My father was increasingly ill. But I hesitated. Would I be abandoning my calling if I took a job which gave us external security? This whole, unique worldwide fellowship had functioned because so many people had given up everything to be free to work wherever they were needed. I felt frustrated and confused.

Aino saw everything more clearly and simply. She said to me, "If you stick to your innermost loyalty to God, you will have the basis to make the right decision and you will be able to judge the external situation correctly. If you on the other hand lose your first priority, to build a God-led world, yes, then you will have failed your Master."

PART III: NEW LESSONS

18. Back in industry

A friend told me on the phone one day in 1971 that a big company in the Nokia group was looking for a purchasing manager. It had five divisions: lighting, battery production, hard metals, rock drills, machine manufacturing, as well as projects abroad. These were all outside my immediate experience as a chemical engineer, and I thought my age would be a drawback. But I got the job in competition with younger applicants. I might not have been working in industry during the past nineteen years, but I had nevertheless been dealing with the central problems of industry: how to build confidence and create teams that can work well together. In any case it was exciting to start.

My work concerned annual contracts, license agreements, international cooperation and involved 100 days a year overseas, in the Middle East, Asia, America, Africa and the Communist bloc.

Every businessman knows how many things cry out for your attention when you walk into your office in the morning. But the immediate crisis often turns out not to merit first priority at all. More than ever I now experienced the value of the simple spiritual discipline I had learnt at Caux – starting each morning with an hour of prayer and Bible reading and writing down the thoughts which otherwise evaporate so easily, especially when they are unpleasant for oneself.

This time in the morning gave me an inner equilibrium for each

new day. That alone was invaluable. It also helped me see my relationships with my colleagues more clearly and to be aware when I was falling for the temptation to hide my faults, to make excuses for my mistakes, to take all the credit when things went well or to ingratiate myself when I should have taken a clear stand. Even more fascinating were the creative thoughts that began to flow. How could I help my workmates to use all their dormant resources? How to make them forget their timidity and speak up when the talkers tried to dominate?

What amazed me during that first period was the explosive force in the simplest truths I had learnt over the past years. "Not who is right but what is right" or "People are more important than things" had sometimes sounded like empty phrases, but now I discovered the failure to apply these concepts underlay many of the difficulties I encountered. I witnessed how much confusion oversecretive decision-making could cause, how impossible it was for some to admit their mistakes, how ignorant many leaders were of the most elementary means of motivating their coworkers.

We cooperated with a metallurgical firm which employed 1,000 people. One morning on his way to the office the managing director of the company read in the newspaper that his firm had been merged with a major industrial combine. The director was furious. Why this total concealment? He was told that the situation had been so delicate that no outsider could be informed beforehand.

The secretiveness had been totally legal, but hardly wise. Anxiety and a spirit of resignation spread like wildfire through the organization. The younger people began to look for jobs elsewhere, the older ones became cautious and submissive. Within a year the firm had lost two thirds of its exports, in a field that was expanding at the time. A fine company name had been killed. The new owners were disappointed and soon sold off what remained.

Openness is a stumbling block in many enterprises. Why is it so difficult for many managers to motivate their subordinates? "I

give nearly all my time to the company," complained a department manager in our firm. "I would like to identify myself with the company, but I cannot, because I never get an overall picture of where we are heading. Then when a crisis occurs I receive all kinds of severe directives."

A colleague argued that only "realistic facts and prognoses" – not irrational factors – should influence the decision-making process. I asked if making the human infrastructure function was not realistic. Whose job was that? An industrialist remarked that he had no time to handle human relations: "My job is to exploit people".

Beneath an authoritarian style of leadership there is often fear deep down. Fear is an extremely powerful motive, and it usually leads you wrong. Equally pronounced is the loneliness of many industrialists. Prestige has to be preserved at any cost. Often an industrialist has no one with whom he can talk through his problems without filtering his thoughts.

A board member of a big company asked whether I knew why its profits had dropped so drastically. I mentioned the weakening market. That was secondary, he said. The deepest reason was jealousy at the top.

Aino was happy that I was learning to make independent decisions. In the past I had sometimes preferred to leave the last word to somebody else when that was possible. Teamwork can be abused: you can hide behind others so as not to end up with the final responsibility if things fall apart. Aino had sharply criticized me a few times for not taking ultimate responsibility in some tricky situations. I did not like her criticism, and would point out the factual errors in her argument. But I later understood how right she had been.

Aino and I were good comrades. She was a wise counsellor in many situations concerning my work. But I was often a bad listener. An American company spent a great sum training its 70,000 employees in the important skill of listening. My training was considerably cheaper. One day when I came home from

work, Aino began to tell me something. I kept one eye on the newspaper. "You're not hearing what I'm saying!" she said irritably. "I am," I answered. "No, you aren't," she hissed. "What did I say, then?" When I repeated word by word what she had said, she got twice as mad. "Yes, you hear the words, but you don't listen! You don't understand what is really in my heart!"

Aino wished that I would spend more time with our daughter, Elina. I had gradually ended up in the same situation as so many fathers. I usually had to work in the evenings. But Aino was right. I should have found more time.

Elina developed her independence early. She was scarcely five when I once scolded her for something she had done. Elina stamped her foot forcefully on the floor and shook her finger at me, "Dad, you don't understand anything. We women do things differently!"

Before my first day in the firm I worked out roughly how to deal with some of the situations which would come up. They concerned honesty, alcohol, bribes, confidences, conflicts between what I believed in and what the top management might demand.

Aino and I knew what tragedy had hit her own family when her father had been caught in the grip of liquor. He once talked with us about his life, his decision to leave the past behind and what that decision had demanded. We said that we wanted to be such friends to him that if temptation came he would know that wherever in the world we happened to be, we would not take a drop either. Some would say it was fanatical to take such a categorical decision. We regarded it as *realpolitik.*

In Finnish business life, particularly in earlier years, alcohol played a major role. I had a colleague who felt that he could not risk offending important contacts, even though he knew he had a problem with drink. Once he stayed away from work for more than a week because of the downward spiral a business dinner had led him into. It looked as if we would have to sack him.

He came to my office in despair, "If I lose my job my wife says she and our two small children will leave me. Won't you give me

another chance?" I told him about my father-in-law and the decision Aino and I had made. And I added, "I do not believe you will lose any important contract if you decide to follow an uncompromising line, but if you do lose a contract because you choose not to 'lift your glass' we shall consider it a plus in your favour." Ten years later he told me that he had never touched a drop since that day and that he had been able to help many others through Alcoholics Anonymous. He was now a trusted man in the company.

Some businessmen wave aside all talk about honesty as something rather unrealistic. Yet two of Finland's leading chief executives said in an interview that "absolute honesty" was the prime reason for their longterm success in their business with the Soviets.

I once found myself in an awkward situation in negotiations abroad. The head of our delegation maintained that we would have to lie about a certain subject. I looked at him questioningly and he said nervously, "Don't worry. They all lie!" "Yes, that's right," I said, "and they all know it, so what do you think we will achieve?"

Absolute honesty has nothing to do with naivety, nor with a compulsion to tell everything to those who are out to exploit you. It means using methods which can bear the light of day. And it works. Once a conflict arose with a British company with which we had done business for many years. Its director did not believe in the assurances given by our firm. I phoned him and told him how I saw things. "I believe it because it's you who are saying it, but otherwise I would not," he said, and the conflict was over.

Competition was tough. To be a match for the great multinationals we had to keep finding niches in which we could excel. This led to our building factories and co-owned enterprises in the developing world. It could be risky and one sometimes had to pay dearly for one's mistakes. But the price of not taking risks could be greater still.

We won the contract for a factory development in Zambia. We

had the edge on the giant corporations because we already had a factory in Finland of exactly the size the Zambians wanted, while our competitors could only show drawings. But we didn't fully realize what we were getting into. Our project manager advised us to become more familiar with the social and political realities in this one-party state, but the final agreement was made at a "higher level" and he was overruled.

The site for the factory was in northern Zambia in one of the worst malaria regions, close to where Livingstone had died. There was no railway and the road from the capital, Lusaka, passed through a turbulent part of Zaire. The Zairi military police occasionally forced us at gunpoint to pay "tax", especially when once again they had not received their wages. There was no hotel in the town, only a so-called "travellers' home" which you shared with a large family of cockroaches. There was sometimes water and electricity. The project workers had to keep their own chickens and banana trees to supplement the irregular food supply.

Our project manager had a dreadful job. The factory was intended to be the growth-point for new industry in this remote part of the country. The setbacks included malaria, snake bites, sabotage, burglary and a murder attempt. My job included training some of the staff, procuring machinery from different parts of the world and establishing international contacts when production got going. When the factory was completed, the first batch of goods it produced "disappeared" one night into Zaire.

A year later I went to Lusaka to represent our company at the board meeting. Seldom in my life – maybe with the exception of my early days in the Finnish army – have I been told off so roughly. The government representative, a deputy minister, let loose a few hours' attack, first against our company, then against me and finally against the white race in general. The following day I met a high official who had heard about the episode. "You must understand," he said, "that the attack had nothing to do with you and your company. It was all staged for home consumption and political reasons." Some time later the same fate befell the Chairman of the Board of the whole Nokia combine, when he

travelled down to help our project manager resolve a new conflict.

At home in Finland we were exposed to arrogant criticism by bureaucrats who analysed exactly what had gone wrong without having any personal experience of what was involved. Years later I learnt that the factory was working at 50 per cent capacity. That was way above average and the factory was one of the few procuring foreign currency for the country.

Many groups from Zambia came to Finland for training in our company. The result varied a lot. The Finns did not always grasp the culture shock some of the Africans experienced. Once when we had a delegation I asked a director what our firm should do for the group after official working hours. "That is no responsibility of ours," he said. "They can walk around the city and look at shop windows. They have nothing like that at home."

One young engineer reacted strongly against this indifference and lack of care. When a new group arrived he and his wife and their two school-age children decided to provide a programme for every evening and weekend of their four weeks' stay, without getting any remuneration. The spirit of this group was the best of all we received. When they returned home they were strongly motivated to pass on the training they had received in Finland.

The economy of care has never suffered inflation. Leadership in industry has not so much to do with position as with vision.

While we were engaged in Zambia we got a new managing director. I and some others in the firm found ourselves on a collision course with him. He had his favourites, partly based on party political affiliation. I was passed over for an appointment and took it hard. I told Aino that I wanted to leave the company, and started negotiating with another firm for a new job with a higher salary.

I was also wondering whether I should make a complete change and become a church minister. Perhaps that would give me a chance to influence Finnish public opinion towards concern for the developing countries. My cousin, Risto Lehtonen, himself a

theologian and later the head of the Finnish church development aid agency, threw cold water on this idea. "If you want to affect development in Africa, a businessman with convictions carries so much more weight than a clergyman."

Aino was afraid that I was on the point of making a wrong decision. "If you are bitter because of what happened you cannot see clearly," she said, "and then you can't make a clear decision either."

I had to admit that Aino was right. In a quiet time one morning I had the thought not to leave the company – and not to leave the project manager in Zambia in the lurch. "Stay. Be willing to serve in your work as well as you can, irrespective of what happens to you," I wrote in my notebook. Some months passed. The company I had planned to move to collapsed. The managing director left the firm. I was soon in the midst of the most essential tasks I had ever had.

19. Assignment from Calcutta

We had established cooperation with many companies all over India. Once on the way from Bangkok I stopped in Calcutta, a city seething with life. Sanitation, electricity, water, transport were all in a miserable condition. Epidemics raged frequently. The authorities saw the city as a practically unsolvable problem. It is best just to leave it as it is, many said to me, and concentrate on developing other territories. At night there were thousands of small fires on the sidewalks where people prepared their food and lived their lives. The odour and atmosphere had a strange attraction in spite of all the misery, and the inhabitants themselves loved their city.

While I was in Calcutta I wanted to take greetings to Mother Teresa and her coworkers from the Friends of Emmaus in Finland who actively supported her work. Aino was on the board of Emmaus. I did not know whether Mother Teresa herself was in the city at the time. A twelve-year-old boy eagerly offered to show me the way to her centre at 54, Lower Circular Road.

When we arrived the boy disappeared. I waited a while in the entrance hall. In a white-plastered sideroom some fifteen nuns were on their knees, deep in prayer. Then the boy returned and asked me to follow him upstairs. A small woman with a wrinkled face and a gentle smile came towards me. Immediately I recognized Mother Teresa. With great cordiality she asked me to sit down on a stone bench on the roof outside her room.

She began talking about her visit to Scandinavia to receive her Nobel prize and her impressions of life in our part of the world. "What struck me about people there," she said, "was their poverty of aims. That is a much more serious kind of poverty than the one I see here, and much more difficult to cure."

Mother Teresa was strongly preoccupied by the needs of Europe's welfare states. How to do something about the hardness of heart that isolated people from each other? She was calm but at the same time full of eagerness. "So many have said to me that if only they had time or were younger or did not have financial worries and so much to take care of, they would come and help me in Calcutta." And she continued with some sharpness, "I don't want them here! Their place is not here! My calling has brought me here. But I believe that your calling in Europe is to interpret anew what God's love means. To think through how love and care for fellow-citizens can become the driving force in society and in industry."

I would not have expected this small wrinkled woman to know anything about industry and business, but she touched on the crucial point of motivation – the question of life and death for our modern industrial society. It is self-evident that without an inner motivation, which stretches beyond group interests, it will become impossible to solve our most urgent problems – such as ethnic conflicts, environmental problems, mounting unemployment and the reshaping of the former Communist world. Thinking only in terms of economics leads up a blind alley. If profit is the EU's only motive it has no chance of creating a well-functioning Europe in balance with the rest of the world.

Investigations into Chernobyl and other atomic power stations have revealed a sinister lack of quality in details. A lack of "inner quality" always has outer expressions. And in such cases it is no longer a private affair.

Mother Teresa returned to the infinite value of each individual. The worst thing that can happen to a person is to be unwanted. "So many have said to me that what we do here is magnificent. But, they add, of course, it is obvious that you sisters can only

reach a fraction of all those who need help." She smiled and exclaimed, "They're missing the whole point! God does not understand arithmetic at all! He uses single individuals whose hearts have been lit by a fire, who have been gripped by a vision and a calling. That is the way things start moving!"

We went on talking for a while.Then she asked one of the nuns to take me to the wards for dying people. There were mainly old people lying there, but also incurably ill children. The sisters moved around calmly and purposefully, apparently without stress, stopping occasionally at someone's bed to exchange a few words. An unusual, relaxed atmosphere prevailed.

Before saying goodbye Mother Teresa turned her big, serious eyes on me and said, "Be faithful to God!" There was nothing more to be added.

One weekend while I was in Calcutta I looked up Satya Bannerjee, a trade union leader whose name I had got from a friend in Britain. Bannerjee had once been at Caux with an industrial delegation and had become a force for reconciliation in the conflict-loaded province of West Bengal.

After wandering around the giant city for some time I eventually found his home in Khaligat. He offered me tea and immediately coopted me as his workmate. After only a quarter of an hour he asked whether I would like to go out with him to meet people in industry. We kept going for the rest of the day and all the next. Bannerjee was a real enthusiast, who had organized industrial seminars for thousands of people. His message was straightforward: the first step to solving problems and creating confidence was to swallow your pride and start with yourself.

Easter was approaching. On the morning I was to travel on to southern India, Bannerjee showed me an article he had torn out of a paper about the death and resurrection of Jesus. Bannerjee himself was a Hindu. "I read this page about Jesus," he said. "What is written here is important to me and others in industry. So I phoned an industrial chief executive and agreed that we should take a whole day together to think through what it means

to us." I had never met anyone from industry in Europe, either Christian or non-Christian, who would have made such a suggestion to a colleague.

Many in Europe underestimate India as an industrial nation. It is true that hundreds of millions of Indians live in misery, but the country's industries in many ways stand comparison with those of Europe.

Just before departing, I visited a factory in Bangalore, arriving unintentionally on the very day the machines were to start rolling for our common project. It was a fortunate omen that I had arrived just now, I was told. Speeches and ceremonies followed. We walked in procession through the factory, passing by a shrine. Drenched in the heavy humid heat, I shook hands with hundreds of people. A man came forward with a big bowl of some yoghurt-like substance and poured a portion into my wet dirty palms, to be swallowed as a thank-offering. There was a great atmosphere. But how will it affect my poor stomach, I wondered. All went well to begin with, but at the airport my "inner peace" came to an end.

My journeys in developing countries opened my eyes to our responsibility for the misery which burdens a great part of the world's population, and inspired me to write a book, *Your Burden is Mine.* Although we in Scandinavia do not have a past as colonial powers, we are guilty too. Our welfare has been created at the cost of the continued impoverishment of the people of the South.

20. It's your honour to start the dance!

Aino was standing in the entrance hall when I arrived back from East Germany at midnight. Before I had even said hello, she burst out, "I know what you are going to say." "What do you mean?" I asked. "Exactly what you said when you returned last time!" I had probably remarked how strange it was that I returned from these Marxist atheistic dictatorships with a stronger faith in God and a stronger conviction about His calling than I had before the journey. It was impossible not to be stirred by the Christians I met in those countries.

As our business expanded I travelled innumerable times to East Germany, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the Soviet Union and Poland. In the West people spoke of the Eastern Bloc and assumed that it represented a certain homogeneous entity. The reality was totally different. I could not discover any trace of mutual loyality within the bloc. The old antipathies between countries, minorities and majorities were as strong as ever. Behind the facade, the distrust of Moscow in the smaller countries was next to total.

Every year I used to participate in the international fair in Leipzig, which had been taking place for over 100 years. The fair was above all a propaganda show for East Germany. In the early Seventies the city was saturated with slogans. Giant red banners hung from the edge of the roofs: "Long live 1st of May!", "The unbreakable fighting solidarity between the German Democratic

Republic and the Soviet Union is strengthened year by year, strongly anchored in the brotherhood between the socialist countries", "To learn from the Soviet Union is to learn to win", etc. As the years passed the banners decreased and their message changed. They now tried to make capital out of history. In 1983, the 500th anniversary of Luther's birth, the shop windows in Leipzig had pictures of Luther and Marx side by side. "Two great Germans who fought for social justice," said the text.

Because of the shortage of hotels I usually stayed in a student hostel which was vacated for the fair. Only the students from Mozambique and Angola stayed on. They had few opportunities to meet Germans.

When I did not have to sit at endless dinners I used to go out to explore the city. The dark streets were rather empty. One autumn night in 1972 I entered an empty church and noticed a pale blue mimiographed sheet stuck to the inside of the door. It advertised a theatre group, which was giving a performance that same evening. I found the place in a house on a side street. In a small hall on the upper floor some twenty people were sitting, a group of nuns, some schoolgirls and older people, and then I.

The theatre group was to perform a play written by a certain Ruth Langhammer. The arrangements were the simplest possible. An elderly man stepped forward and welcomed everybody and especially the foreign guests to the fair, i.e. me. Then he gave a brief account of the play, and finally said, "If you look deeper into the play you will understand what consequences it would have for the whole of society."

My curiosity was aroused. I sat as if nailed to the chair. I had seldom experienced such intensity. I completely forgot the primitive setting. After the performance I went up to one of the actors, who turned out to be Ruth Langhammer herself, a woman in her fifties. I asked her where they got their passionate convictions from. To begin with she was constrained and cautious. The secret police maintained a colossal operation in Leipzig during the fair. But after a while we established contact. "Even in these difficult conditions in which we live," she said, "we felt that we had to

reach out with the Gospel in a fresh way to new people." It turned out that she had come to Hamburg before the Berlin Wall had been erected and seen one of Peter Howard's plays, *Mr Brown Comes Down the Hill,* which explored how Christ would have been received in Britain in the Sixties. She had made a courageous attempt to stage the play in Leipzig but had been stopped.

I learnt that the theatre group was the only one of its kind in East Germany. In the beginning it had given performances all over the country, and even some guest performances in West Germany. Now it was only allowed to perform in Karl Marx Stadt, Dresden and Leipzig. But the cast frequently gave secret performances in other places.

Every play had to be censored in advance, Ruth told me, but the censors sometimes missed the point and "above all they could not censor the spirit on the stage". The group were forbidden to advertise their performances or to take entrance fees. Everything hung on their willingness to sacrifice. They drove from place to place in a small dilapidated bus.

Those who joined the group had to abandon all thoughts of a professional career. Siegfried Hollitzer, one of their foremost actors, had lost his state appointment when he became a Christian. He now worked with Langhammer for a laughable salary. He also worked intensively for the cause of the Jews and was becoming an expert on Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish businessman who saved the lives of thousands of Hungarian Jews in 1944.

Hollitzer's family had suffered greatly. When his children grew into their teens they were forbidden to continue at high school because of their courageous stand. His daughter Konstanze was scolded by her teachers in front of all the pupils: "You are not worthy to be a citizen of the German Democratic Republic. You are a disgrace to the country!" When, at the age of fifteen, she tried to get into the Institute of Music, she was grilled by the whole staff for two hours. They were keen to have such a gifted student, but first she had to join the "Free German Youth". Konstanze refused to give in, although her friends tried to per-

suade her, "Nobody believes in all this, but think of your career!" Later, when this period was history, I asked Konstanze what she now thought about her attitude at the time. "Nothing makes me and my brothers happier than the fact that we did not give in."

I turned my purse inside out when I left the "theatre" that evening in Leipzig. Here were people who had the same vision as the one I had once met at Caux. How could we cooperate? Maybe it was a utopian thought.

I also made friends with Herbert Dost, the church deacon who had introduced the play that evening, and his wife. Before the war, as a young theologian, Dost had participated in a seminar for clergymen in Berlin. "There was an American Lutheran minister with us," he told me. "I believe his name was Frank Buchman. In a house on the opposite side of the street Goebbels was working with his staff. Buchman inspired me in a fresh way to reach new people, and I went on doing so. I was called by the Nazis for interrogation nearly 40 times. Then came the war with its disasters for my family. But after the war I was still inspired by the same vision, even under Communist rule."

When Dost started the theatre group, the authorities saw his work as dangerous. He was accused of being a former Gestapo agent, and now a US spy. "The church must be protected against such criminals," said the Communist Party. One day he was kidnapped on the street and taken to a secret prison. His wife had no idea what had happened to him. He was thrown into an ice-cold prison cell of two by two metres. Every morning the guard forced him under an icy shower. Dost decided not to despair but to pray for the guard, and after a time this man gave his life to God. The only thing he could do for Dost was to warm the water. The prison authorities got wind of what had happened and changed the guard. The new man also became a Christian.

Shortly afterwards there was an international political thaw and many prisoners were released, including Dost. The church youth plucked up their courage and when Dost approached his home at the majestic Bach Church, hundreds of young people broke into a psalm. They belonged to the circle of militant Christians who

at the end of the Eighties played a leading role in pulling East Germany out of the grip of Communism.

In the middle of the Seventies I asked my friends in Leipzig what was the most important thing we in the West could do for them, expecting them to ask us to pray for them and not forget them. But Ruth Langhammer said, "What we most of all need is a perspective of God's battle in the world. It's as if we were in a canyon. What's happening outside? How does God intervene in the course of events today? And secondly, we long for confirmation that it is worth remaining faithful to God, even though we are isolated and constantly harassed."

It dawned on me that if we who lived in the free world stuck to our calling and put it before any advantage to ourselves, we could meet those in the East on an equal level, as workmates. No outer wall could separate us, even though it stopped these friends on the other side from visiting us.

For twenty years I visited the group in Leipzig every year and encouraged others from abroad to establish contact with them too. I did not stay in my hotel for a single evening. Home after home made me welcome. In the mid-Eighties Ruth courageously decided to initiate the first MRA gathering in Leipzig. Everything still had to happen in the greatest secrecy. The participants arrived at the hall at pre-fixed intervals.

In the Seventies a kind of "success theology" began to spread in the Western world. If you followed God, all would go well, in business, with your health and everything else. If things went badly, there was something wrong with your connection to God. This superficial way of thinking gained ground in many quarters.

In the East it was exactly the opposite. Those who took their faith seriously risked losing their jobs, places at university, careers. The question today is whether the conviction which then inspired so many East Germans will survive. The East Germans have often felt like second class citizens in reunited Germany. Will they let themselves be pulled into a spiral of materialism, or can they help to plant new values in the whole country?

The East German government wanted major contracts to be concluded during the Leipzig fair, so that they could boost their statistics and their reputation as a leading industrial nation.

In "safe company" many East German industrialists did not miss a chance to make wry comments about the system. A frustrated executive sighed in my presence, "The only statistics I trust nowadays are the ones I have falsified myself." The technical director of another company greeted me with the words, "Thirty years ago our industry had reached the edge of a precipice. Today we have taken a decisive step forward." Answering a question on how many people worked in his factory, he said, "Half, at the most."

Normally when all the technical and commercial points of a contract had been clarified, a trusted party man from the industrial combine stepped in for the final session. One year I found myself confronted with a man with a stony face and a somewhat cynical smile. I cannot say that I felt sympathy for him. In my imagination I could see him dressed in an SS-uniform.

There was a huge pile of papers on the table. I asked the official whether he was now satisfied with the contract. On the whole it was in order, he said, but it had not been duly authorized, and it lacked stamps and signatures. I was fed up with the endlessly dragged-out procedure. "You can have a signature in the corner of every single page and any amount of stamps you want," I said. "But if there is no trust between us, the whole pile of papers is not even worth the price of the raw paper." And I continued, "It is exactly like a marriage contract. What importance does it have if one doesn't intend to stick to it?"

A sudden impulse made me go on, "When my wife and I got married we made the decision to have no secrets between us." The party man looked at me in amazement, jumped forward to the edge of his chair, pointed his finger at me and asked, "How does that work?" "Well," I replied, "I am sure you understand that when one travels around the world one meets all kinds of situations and temptations. Keeping such a promise when you get home can sometimes be slightly embarrassing. But still it has

been the most important and valuable decision we have made in our whole marriage."

From that moment onwards the party man never returned to the contract. Instead he started to talk openly about his family, his two children, and his worries and difficulties. His arrogance was gone. I was amazed. It struck me that we were men of opposite political outlooks, different languages and traditions but we could meet as two human beings who shared the same worries and hopes. I was ashamed of my set attitude. I decided I would never again put a man or his nation into my box of prejudices.

If our factory construction work in Africa and the Arab world put our project people to the test, the same was true in East Europe.

In competition with the Swedes we had won a contract to build two factories in Bulgaria, one at Plovdiv and another in Khardzali close to the Greek border. As in all Comecon countries, the project involved contracts as thick as telephone books, endless protocols and seemingly impenetrable bureaucracy. It was not possible to sign the final contract because some minor changes had occurred. The final responsibility kept being delegated further up – and in the end the Prime Minister's signature was required as no one further down would risk a wrong decision. But the Prime Minister had just gone on holiday to the Black Sea. So we had to wait.

We gradually found that the Bulgarians, once things got going, had a certain style and large-mindedness. They were not systematic like the Germans. There were always mistakes in the contract-bundles, potential pitfalls for them as much as for us. "Tomorrow if it does not work out today," they would say. And we soon discovered that the paragraph-jungle was so cumbersome to them that we did not have to fear that they would push us up against a wall. "Let's not spend more time than necessary on this difficult paragraph," was their approach. In every deadlock some new door would open. Gradually a certain trust developed, refreshingly free from bureaucracy.

The factory in Plovdiv was approaching its completion. Our

project manager and I were sitting one day with the combine manager and the chief engineer, who were beaming with satisfaction. Compliments were exchanged and we were both given a thick, heavy medal with a picture of Blagoev, the founder of the Communist party in Bulgaria. In the evening the top man invited us to a gala supper in an outdoor restaurant surrounded by palm trees. Most of the directors and their wives were also invited. Toasts and speeches of thanks succeeded each other and the spirit was rising.

During the dessert, an orchestra marched into our section of the restaurant and set up a fiery, rhythmic and strange tune. The manager turned to me and said, "It's your honour to start the dance." I had no idea what kind of dance the tune represented. There was no escape. I said to myself, "For Finland and our firm!", bowed to my dinner partner, the rather solid wife of the manager, and led her out on the empty floor. I decided to trust my good sense of rhythm and started off without restraint. We took the curves elegantly, and at a dashing pace, leaning at 45 degrees. Every now and then I rotated my corpulent lady. "These new Western dances are fantastic," she cried with enthusiasm. "I will suggest to my husband that he employs you as a guest dance teacher for the recreational activities at the combine!" Clearly a new career if I was to lose my job in Finland!

21. Polish blood

No one can accuse the Poles of being over-cautious. "If we could acquire even a little of the instinct for political balance of the Finns, things would be much easier for us," a Polish politician once told me wistfully. "As soon as we have made some headway our temper gets the better of us and things go to pieces once again." But one might also ask whether Poland would be a free country today without this reckless temper.

We were sitting at a long table in the head office of a large company in Warsaw, during the Seventies when Communism still held the country in an iron grip. There were two of us from our company and ten Poles. One of the Polish managers asked, "Which language shall we use?" He continued, "My Russian is fluent, of course, but we refuse to speak it." In the evening we were invited to a gala dinner in the best restaurant in the Old City. The head of the combine, which employed more than 30,000 people, got up, raised his glass and welcomed us in a loud voice, "Our two countries both have their great man. You have your Mannerheim, we have our Pilsudski (the great Polish independence leader of the late 19th and early 20th centuries). To your health!" This was something you should not say in Poland at that time.

My business travels took me to different parts of Poland on dozens of occasions. Things did not always work as we hoped. Our company once built a plant in Poland, but different interpre-

tations of the contract led to a conflict, and finally both parties considered it necessary to go to court.

Through these events, however, Janusz Witkowski, one of the leaders of the enterprise, and I became friends. I sometimes stayed in his home when I visited Warsaw. Janusz was commercial director although he was not a party member, because his wide experience and knowledge of languages made him indispensable.

His father had been a general in the Polish national army during World War II and a close colleague of the defender of Warsaw, General Bor Komorowski, whom I had met when I first went to Caux. While the battle in the city centre raged, twelve-year-old Janusz and his little sister managed to escape to the riverbank by wading through the city sewers. Three motor boats with refugees set off across the river – the one they were on made it, but the other two were sunk. At the end of the war the fourteen-year-old Janusz returned destitute from the countryside to the city. Both the family's city home and its country one had been destroyed. During the war 600,000 Warsaw citizens perished.

Janusz graduated from the Technical University and married Janina. As a schoolgirl she had gone on a singing tour of the Soviet Union with her choir and got caught up in the German attack on the country. The choir was not allowed to return to Poland and Janina and a friend were sent to Stalingrad to work in an arms factory. She and two other girls managed to escape through the lines during the battle for Stalingrad four days before the city was completely encircled. She got home after months of hardship, only to find that the Germans had just arrested her father. Every Polish family is a living illustration of the country's bloody modern history.

Their son Marek was time and again out on the streets taking part in student demonstrations against the militia. Janina was in a constant state of panic about him. Late one winter evening, as I was sitting there with the family, Marek arrived home. "Have you been out being careless again?" Janusz asked sharply. "If we are cautious like you, we will never be free," Marek lashed back.

Janusz raised his voice: "You are young and you completely lack historical perspective. You don't understand what our country has gone through. If everyone did the same as you, our country would go to hell!" Marek got agitated, "If everyone did the same as you, we would lose the game. You are a traitor!" Now the gentle mother tried to calm her menfolk.

Next day Janusz said to me, "Yesterday we touched on a delicate dividing line. I sometimes ask myself whether in fact I am a traitor because I am too cautious."

A group of patriotric industrialists from all over Poland used to meet in secret to discuss their difficulties. Janusz told me that one question which kept coming up was whether it was more patriotic to obstruct industry by following the rules to the letter – which would lead to stagnation, but also to a lower standard of living – or to work as effectively as circumstances allowed to revitalize the economy, even though the Communist leadership would take the credit.

When Solidarity had its breakthrough shortly after the visit of the Pope in 1979, everyone was euphoric. Janusz took me to Solidarity's headquarters in Warsaw. It seethed with activity, but at the same time there was uneasiness in the air. "Things cannot go on like this for very long," said Janusz. "This is a an ill-omened calm." A few months later I was back in Warsaw. Janusz was restless. "Every night I wake up at the slightest sound and go to the window. Have the Russians come?" His concern was justified. Just a few weeks later Jaruzelski's militia marched by his home. Martial law was declared.

Janusz's son Marek was called up for military service and put on duty at Warsaw airport. One day a plane from Italy arrived and Marek's boss remarked that Italy and Poland had much in common. As usual Marek could not check his tongue. "True," he said, "we each have our mafia." He was immediately sent off to a garrison in a remote part of the country.

Martial law was still in force when I next visited Janusz's factory. Quickly he said to me, "We cannot speak freely in any of the rooms. They're all bugged. Let's go to the cemetery instead! But

don't say anything in the car. Yesterday I found out that my new company chauffeur is in the secret military police." So we went on a "sightseeing tour", first to the old cemetery and then to the place where the Communist Party bosses had their splendid monuments. There we did our negotiations and forged our plans. Back in the car, at Janusz's suggestion, I expressed some words of appreciation of the "outstanding merits" of the old Communist leaders.

Senior Poles, including Janusz, did not believe that they would ever see a free Poland again. They were wrong. In spite of everything, Stalin's militia soon proved to be weaker than "the divisions of the Pope". One evening in a packed church I saw an old woman standing, leaning on her stick. When the time came to pray, she laboriously "climbed" down her stick and reached the floor just as the prayer had nearly finished, and then slowly got up again. There was no question of taking it easy. "It would be impossible for God to let such a nation perish," I thought.

In the late Seventies a friend in Bonn asked me to call on a former Polish politician whom he had once met in Germany. In the heart of old Warsaw I found Stanislaw and Elvira Stomma's home. With the aid of old maps and photos the Poles had succeeded in restoring the completely bombed out old city to its original shape.

The Stommas' past was also typically Polish. Elvira had been born in 1924 in a prison camp in North Siberia, where her mother had been taken after the First World War. Her father was sent to a camp on Solovetsk Island in the White Sea and only returned, in a dreadful state, in 1928. He died soon afterwards. Stanislaw's family had lost its large estate in Lithuania during World War I. World War II had left them completely destitute once more.

Stanislaw was a lawyer, but after the war when everything had collapsed, his faith was all he had left. He started to study theology. The fellow student he was closest to was the future Pope, Karol Wojtyla. "But then a fateful element entered the scene," said Stanislaw, pointing at his wife. "She came along and

dragged me out of theology into the world of law again." "That was indeed fateful," I said, "a Finnish proverb says that it is practically impossible for a lawyer to get into heaven."

Stomma became a professor in criminal law, and later an MP for the small Catholic party which the Communists allowed to exist so as to give a semblance of democracy. Many in Poland maintained that a real patriot should not be a member of a Communist-ruled parliament at all. Stomma's view was that the functions of society had to continue, and some who were not members of the Party should be involved. In addition Cardinal Wyszynski was anxious that the Church should have an "observation-post" in political life, so that it could prepare counteractions in time.

The political situation deteriorated in 1976, when a new constitutional law to establish the supremacy of the Communist Party was due for ratification. "This was a principle where I could not compromise," said Stomma. He handed me two dramatic press photos. One showed 459 members of parliament raising their hands to approve the ratification. Only Stomma had his hand down. The other showed those who raised their hands against the motion. Stomma was the only one.

Stomma had to leave Parliament. But his position was now firmly rooted amongst the Poles. When I met him he was Chairman of the Social Advisory Committee of the Archbishop, in the middle of critical negotiations on cooperation between church and state. Stomma was short, tactful and extremely courteous – a Polish gentleman of the old school. Perhaps there was a certain similarity to Charlie Chaplin. One did not immediately realise that he was in fact a powerful man of action.

A cousin in Finland, who was proud of her Polish blood, always asked me about the people I met in Poland. When I mentioned Stomma's name she said that it sounded familiar. "Just think, we may be relatives!" "You're crazy," said her sister. "The country has 35 million inhabitants." "We could do some research anyway," I suggested.

One evening in the Stomma home we compared our family

trees, and to our great surprise discovered that the families were indeed linked, through the wife of a certain General Stomma in the Tsar's army, who occasionally stayed in Finland during the summers. "Ela!" Stanislaw shouted to his wife in the kitchen. "We have relatives in Finland! Let's celebrate!" Stanislaw pulled out a bottle of old brandy. "Yes," I said, "you've got to get to know these 'close' relatives!"

We succeeded not only in getting Stanislaw and Elvira to Helsinki, but also their son who had applied for asylum in France. Stomma gave many responsible people in Finland valuable insights into the Polish situation.

The Stommas now wanted in their turn to introduce me to different circles in Poland. One day Stanislaw took me to Laski, a Catholic centre for blind children close to Warsaw, where a small group of volunteers without official support took care of several hundred children. In the Thirties Laski had been a centre for spiritual renewal in the Polish church. Elvira had worked there as a nurse for three months during the Warsaw uprising of 1944, when the Poles fought the Germans and waited in vain for Russian assistance. Engraved in Elvira's memory were the small blind children putting their hands into hers as the battle raged. The visit was the beginning for me of a contact with Laski which has continued till today.

The Stommas knew about my involvement in the industrial conferences in Caux. Stanislaw was sympathetic to what Caux stood for although he was not keen on Switzerland and was sceptical about whether well-meaning people at Caux could grasp Poland's brutal reality and have anything to contribute to the situation. When the Stommas eventually did visit Caux, they were surprised. "I have found that I still have a task to do," said Stanislav, who was then nearly 80. "One of the great obstacles to Poland's development lies in the cynicism amongst our leading intellectuals. That has to go."

When at last the dams broke and Poland severed her links with the Soviet Union and Communism, Stomma was elected to the new Senate with 80 per cent of the votes in a constituency which

was not his own homeground. As the eldest Senator, at 82, he opened the new Senate in 1991.

Two years earlier Stanislaw had celebrated his 80th birthday in Warsaw. The Vatican sent a representative to conduct a special service in his honour. A couple of days before he was invited to a festive dinner in the West German Embassy, where the German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, decorated him with the highest award his country could give a foreigner, for his work of rebuilding relations between Poland and Germany.

Stanislaw traced this initiative back to a small event on the family estate in Lithuania when he was a young child. During World War I sometimes Russians and sometimes Germans marched through the district. One young German non-commissioned officer taught Stanislaw to ride and showed him kindness and care. The boy thought that all Germans could not be the devils people told him they were.

After World War II, and all the cruelties and extermination camps in Poland, no one wanted to establish contact with Germany. "Then I remembered my experience as a boy," said Stomma, "and I decided to take steps to build bridges to Germany. It's amazing how just one event was to mark my whole attitude!" Then he added, "Now the question is, how do we build bridges to the Russians. That is going to be more difficult."

22. The challenge from President Sadat

In 1977 the news of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's journey to Jerusalem to build a bridge to Israel and its Prime Minister caught the attention of the whole world. Jimmy Carter's unflagging work behind the scenes in Camp David had paved the way for this step. Yet it was something no one would have dreamt of after the humiliations Egypt had suffered.

Something in Sadat's initiative touched me in the depth of my soul. I had so many strong bonds to the Arab world. Some political commentators argued that Sadat was merely being opportunist, but I was convinced that God Himself had been the architect. Sadat had placed his own authority, his life and his political future at stake in an effort to achieve reconciliation. Soon he had to pay with his life for his boldness.

I thought about Sadat for many days. Early one morning a thought hit me, "What is your Jerusalem?" Absorbed in my demanding job and the travels it involved, it was easy to forget the conflicts we had lived through in MRA. Yet I felt sad about the broken bonds between colleagues who shared the same calling but could no longer cooperate. "Would I have the courage to act like Sadat?" I asked myself. I could not get rid of the thought. One day I prayed, "God, if there is one step – however small – which you want me to take to bring reconciliation, please show it to me and make me willing to take it."

Not long afterwards I was back in Poland with our company

president. One chilly, dark December morning we were driving with Janusz in a Polish company car to a firm in Pabianicze, a long distance from Warsaw. We were half asleep in our seats when the chauffeur shouted "Jesus!" The car was moving sideways, then slowly rotating, still at a speed of 120 kph. The road was covered with black ice and the car had ordinary summer tyres. We bumped sideways over the middle section of the motorway without turning over, passing between the powerline poles towards the ditch on the other side and finally stopped in the middle of the other carriageway. Another car came towards us at high speed, but missed us by an inch by driving straight into a field. In the evening the head of the combine hosted a great dinner, proposing toast after toast "to your salvation". Jesus had surely heard the driver's cry for help, I thought. Yet again my skin had been saved.

Soon afterwards, Aino had a similar experience. She complained one day of a slight earache. As a schoolgirl she had suffered from a serious inflammation of the ears but it had left no mark other than weakened hearing in one ear. She went to a doctor who reassured her and gave her some pills. When this did not seem to help, she consulted an ear specialist, who also told her the problem would soon pass.

One morning in our quiet time we each, independently, had the thought that we should seek out yet another specialist. Aino thought it was rather presumptuous of us to doubt these physicians, but decided all the same to follow the thought we had received.

A friend recommended a Finnish professor who was perhaps the best in his line in Europe. "If he does not know, then no one does," my friend said. Aino managed to get an appointment with the professor – no mean feat in itself. "The previous diagnoses are completely wrong," he told her. "Your case is so serious that we must operate immediately. An infection is penetrating into your brain and could quickly lead to death. I will put you at the top of the queue." The operation was successful.

Within a short span of time we had each got our life back. We

asked each other what this meant.

One day a clear thought struck me, "God is never indecisive and unclear. Your Jerusalem is Stockholm." I immediately knew what this meant. For many years I had collaborated with a Swede, but since the split in MRA I had completely closed my heart to him. I did not hate him but I had removed him from my consciousness. Repentance began to fill me. I realized that my attitude in God's eyes was worse than hate because hate at least takes a stand towards a person.

What my Swedish colleague had done or left undone was now suddenly totally irrelevant. It was up to me to ask him to forgive my cold attitude. I also needed to ask God to forgive me and to fill me with a new love. I told Aino about my thoughts. "It would be a drastic step to take," she said.

The reconciliation which resulted has lasted. The relationship was not only healed but we established a bond of friendship which has continued till this day. I watched with astonishment as the consequences spread like rings in the water. I soon found myself back in the midst of a working fellowship without frontiers.

I had not visited Caux for fourteen years. Now I saw the place with new eyes. Its magic had nothing to do with brilliant lectures and analyses, but with a milieu where people got inspiration on their own role, so that God's will could break through the world's unresolved problems. When you have once received a vision which gives a global perspective to what you do, you will never be satisfied with anything narrower. MRA was no longer to me a "movement" where I had a task. It was rather a common mission to bring the healing power of forgiveness and inner freedom into the heart of modern society.

This discovery of a new mission in life filled me with gratitude. Aino noticed the difference. During the past years she had sometimes complained that I was like a caged lion, irritable, fretful, touchy and dissatisfied. This had created tensions between us. We found a new unity in a calling we could both devote our energies to without reservation. This helped to carry us through the unexpected difficulties we soon had to face.

"Imagine if it were possible to create a heart in Parliament," Aino said to me one day. While I was constantly occupied with meetings and business journeys, Aino had often wondered whether there was anything we could do to help our politicians to see things in a wider perspective. Were we in Finland satisfied as long as things went well for our own country? If only we had a group of parliamentarians who would start thinking about what we could give beyond our borders.

How could Aino's idea come about? The key came from Africa.

During a visit to London in 1980, a friend said to me, "I have two young friends from Zimbabwe whose dream it is to visit Scandinavia before they go home. Could you do something about it? The problem is that Rhodesia has ceased to exist, but Zimbabwe has not officially come into being, and the embassies of Scandinavia say that it is therefore impossible." The matter was complicated but through the help of a kind man in Helsinki the two Zimbabweans got special permits. Here was a splendid chance for our politicians to learn about their country. The independence struggle was over, and everyone wanted to know what had prevented a major bloodbath.

Mikko Asunta contacted the Foreign Ministry and parliamentarians from all parties. There was keen interest. The Zimbabweans described how, during the election process before independence, Alec Smith, son of the white Prime Minister, had helped to arrange a meeting between his father and Robert Mugabe. Ian Smith had recently called Mugabe "an instrument of the Devil" and Mugabe had put Smith on the top of a death list. Alec had been a drug addict and had had a conviction for drug-smuggling. He experienced a miracle and found a Christian faith which he translated into action. The meeting between Smith and Mugabe helped to avert a white coup.

Soon afterwards a documentary film was made in which Alec Smith and some veterans of the independence struggle described their experiences. "That film must have its Finnish première in Parliament," said Mikko Asunta. He got together some 50 MPs – conservatives, Communists, liberals. That afternoon was the

beginning of Aino's idea coming into fruition. Soon after this Alec Smith, who later became the only white army chaplain in the new Zimbabwean army, was our guest in Helsinki for a week.

During the following years a steady stream of guests from different parts of the world came to share their experiences of building reconciliation and cooperation on a foundation that would not be shaken by the first storm. There were church people from Africa and socialist leaders from France, youth from India. Our home was a thoroughfare for people from all continents.

One of our most eager collaborators in Parliament was Margit Borg-Sundman, an MP who had also been President of the World Council of Women. She was one of the most fearless politicians I have met. She dared to take up moral issues and was willing to be misunderstood, because she knew that the immune system of democracy depends on the courage to come under fire when the temptation to keep quiet is strong.

The janitor of the Parliament buildings once said that she was the most honest of all the MPs. She belonged to the Conservative Party, but often, to the annoyance of her party's leaders, voted according to her convictions rather than the party line. Although she was ideologically diametrically opposed to the Communists, she had become a friend of Hertta Kuusinen, Chairperson of the Communist Party and daughter of one of the most trusted of Stalin's wartime government. Both women had suffered deeply and this created a remarkable bond of friendship between them, which lasted in spite of their public clashes.

Margit had played a central part after Karelia was ceded to the Russians in 1944 and half a million Finns had to be resettled west of the new border. After independence Zimbabwe also faced land and resettlement problems and Margit was invited to go and share her experiences. Although she was 80 and had severe health problems, she was determined to accept.

Her friends and relations and her doctor tried to dissuade her, without success. Her cleaning-lady finally said to her in a resigned tone, "So next time we meet, it'll be in heaven." Margit returned not in a coffin, but in better health than when she left.

When Margit celebrated her 85th birthday my daughter Elina, then twenty, stepped forward and said: "In Margit's company I completely forget all age differences."

23. A few weeks left

One morning in January 1983 Aino had a stomach pain. The doctor did not think there was anything exceptional wrong, but to be on the safe side he took a few X-rays and sent them to a specialist. This specialist took some more and suggested a small diagnostic operation. A few days later Aino was taken to hospital.

I met the chief surgeon the morning after the operation, just as he was going into Aino's room. The small incision planned had revealed a far developed cancer and turned into a complicated full-day job for two surgeons. The surgeons had had no alternative but to remove the entire stomach as well as three other organs. The symptoms had been so weak that a proper diagnosis without surgery would have been impossible. From Aino's continuous fatigue perhaps we should have guessed that everything was not as it should be. But it was the dark period of the year, our life was intensive and her tiredness therefore not too surprising.

Aino had just woken up and did not know anything about the result of the operation. The surgeon asked me how much I thought he should tell her. I answered that we had once decided that there would be no secrets between us, and that this was still valid. "If that is the case, nothing could be better," he said. When I saw Aino ten minutes later, she told me what the surgeon had told her, with complete calm. We decided that Elina, who was now fifteen, should know everything – and stuck to this throughout Aino's illness.

With characteristic tenacity, Aino began to recover. One morning she came across a verse in Psalm 103 where the psalmist praises the Lord "for all that is within me". Aino smiled, "There you have precise instructions as to what my attitude to these different stomach troubles should be."

One year later the doctor stated that he could give us a green light for the future. There was no trace of cancer any more. We could make longterm plans, although, of course, the operation meant that Aino would have to accept reduced physical strength and certain complications with eating. It was a day of great rejoicing. We could hardly believe it was true. It was springtime and we even planned a short trip to Switzerland.

Not long afterwards Aino mentioned that eating was slightly more difficult than usual: maybe it would be wise to get some medicine before we travelled. For safety's sake, the doctor wanted to take a few X-rays. The new photos were unclear and the surgeon decided to make a minor incision to ensure that all was well. Aino hoped for the best but was probably prepared deep down for the worst.

It was Easter. In hospital Aino wrote in her diary, "Dear Jesus, you have to cope with all kinds of situations. Let us together look at and experience this situation too." The incision revealed a new large cancer spreading everywhere at alarming speed. The doctor was completely surprised. It was too late for surgery, and neither radiation nor chemotherapy could bring a cure. "This is a cruel disease," the doctor said. He estimated that the end was approaching fast, probably within a few weeks. I left the hospital completely numbed.

For a second time in a year and a half our life perspective had changed. A heavy finality threw its shadow over us. Aino was tenacious and the weeks and months followed each other. But the disease and pain increasingly marked her features, and in the end she only weighed some 40 kilos. She accepted everything without despair, although at times the burden seemed overpowering. "It is also part of life to learn to let go," she once said to me.

Many years later when recession struck Europe I thought of what Aino had said. There was a rockhard refusal among the more fortunate in my country to yield an inch of the advantages they had won for the benefit of the unemployed.

During working hours I was forced to forget the situation at home. But on the way to and from the office it fell over me again. Sometimes I wept the whole way in the car.

The miracle was that the time Aino had left stretched to a full fourteen months. After her death I found the scattered notes she had made in her times of quiet. Aino did not usually save such notes, but these just covered this period. When I read them it occurred to me that this difficult time had had another side to it.

For Aino, her last months had become a quest into an inner world, which is as real as the outer one – how do you find an answer to your fears, what does God's calling mean when all external resources are exhausted, what is the place and use in society of a dying person?

Most striking was the thankfulness that gradually grew in her. In the end it became the thing that carried her. She pointed to a different approach to one's existence, something that can permeate life irrespective of what we encounter.

I asked Elina and Aino's sister to read her notes. Both were convinced that they could be a strong support to other people in similar situations. The result was a small book, *Thankful at Every Turn,* which was subsequently translated into six languages.

Aino alternately lived at home and in hospital. Sometimes she wanted to stay a few days longer at home. It was difficult for Elina and me to know how to act. Elina spent all day at school and my job often compelled me to be abroad. At home we could not give Aino the care she needed. My conscience often plagued me. But Aino believed that God knew what was best at each stage and that step by step He would give the clear guidance we needed. At the beginning of one stay in hospital she wrote, "It is good to be alone and in peace these days, on a 'retreat' in a way. There are certain things and certain situations which are good to face

and deal with alone."

As she confronted death Aino often thought about the future of our teenage daughter, whom she regarded as a great miracle in her life. The doctors had once stated that she would probably never have children. Now Aino realized that Elina's future must be left in the hands of God. "If I feel sorrow on Elina's behalf, it means that I am insisting that her life continues reasonably happy, secure and without changes. That might prevent her greatest growth as a person."

Aino also thought about my future. One day entirely unexpectedly she said, "Today I had a clear thought that you are going to remarry after I have died." "Never!" I answered immediately. "I will never get a companion like you!" To this she said simply, "Now you aren't speaking as God thinks. You won't be closer to God if you don't remarry. Be sure that you don't tie yourself to the past with bonds that He has not inspired." Much later, only a few weeks before she died, she returned to the same subject. "Listen," she said, "do you promise to keep your heart open to a new marriage?" I murmured something indistinct. "Do you promise?" Aino repeated with some sharpness. "All right then," I replied. Four years later I was married again.

Every evening Elina and I walked to the hospital. As the weeks and months passed we got to know every stone on the road. Aino rejoiced that there was nothing unresolved or warped in our relationships. She was lying with fifteen others in a classically beautiful ward in the old surgical hospital of Helsinki, and followed all its comings and goings eagerly. "I want to be Christ's workmate in this ward," she wrote. "It is just to such people He is close, although in normal life I scarcely would have sought their company. But Christ has died for them all, whether they know it or not." Then, with some gallows humour, "I am a so-called hopeless case and my condition is the worst of all in this ward. So I have a chance to encourage them which others don't possess!"

A church employee was once in the adjacent bed, paralyzed by fear. Later she told me that through her talks with Aino she had

found inner peace and new faith. A young couple came a few times to help clean our house, when Aino was at home. The wife said that Aino helped her to embark on a new road, "Here was a dying woman with a much wider vision of what God could do through an individual and a nation that wants to follow Him than I had ever had."

Aino could not accept the way some doctors treated their patients only as medical cases. One consultant who visited her ward every day was a cold fish, who gave his patients no chance to express their own concerns. The chief nurse, and the tail of assistants who followed him, seemed to be in awe of him. One day when he was standing by her bed looking at her notes, Aino could contain herself no longer. "It's impossible, doctor, to get any human contact with you at all," she said in such a loud voice that the whole room heard it. The doctor was visibly taken aback, the chief nurse looked shocked and Aino burst into tears. In the evening the ward sister told Aino, "You expressed what we all feel but none of us has ever dared to say." Next time the consultant came, he was a different man.

Aino's zest for life was irrepressible. She tried to see more hope in her situation than the doctors did. She found some consolation in the fact that those nearest to her were not in the same situation, although she herself would have wanted to be spared from it. One day a nurse exhorted her to live in the realities. "But there are so many realities," Aino wrote. "Self-evidently my situation is a reality, but eternal life and the powerful continuation of life here on earth are also realities. The nurse is right but there is much more behind it all. One reality is our mutual honesty and openness. Reality does not only mean sorrows and difficulties but also God's love."

The Bible had always meant a great deal to Aino. Now it became an inexhaustible source of hope and strength to her. "The Bible is so full of promises. God carries us in every situation and gives us strength to endure all kinds of different situations."

As she lost more and more weight, her strength began to run out. When we were together one day, a member of a congregation

came and presented his views, implying that Aino's sins were the reason for her illness. "If you had more faith you could regain your health," he said. "You must believe in God!" Then he cited a series of Bible verses. I could no longer contain myself. "Of course we believe that God can do miracles today as He did before. But think of St Paul who three times asked to be liberated from his physical pain and was not, but was content with getting strength to bear his suffering."

The visitor got angry and said, "Everybody mentions that example." "It doesn't seem to me to be a bad example as St Paul was a rather devoted Christian, wasn't he?" I replied. "And think of Jesus who asked to be spared from his fate, but was not. Jesus added, 'Not My will but Yours'. And thirdly, those who were healed in the past eventually died, all of them. They only got a little additional time."

Aino was distressed by the visitor and said to me, "Maybe I don't have the kind of faith I should have?" But next morning she was happy and calm. "Do you know, I was thinking that it is indeed possible for God to heal a disease if He wants to. But the essence in us is of course not the body but the soul and the spirit. And if I have been liberated from fear and worry then that is the greatest miracle of all."

Many people came to see her in hospital and at home. Aino once complained to me that so many of them made her downhearted and sad. "I sometimes long for them to encourage me, because I too am a human being who has to fight my own nature all the time. Now I have no other choice than to try to encourage them."

One day a schoolfriend, now married to the American Ambassador, came to see her. Aino wrote, "The husband is the ambassador of a superpower. I am an ambassador of the kingdom of God – and so pitiable. Yet it is the highest calling of all." A few months before her death Aino said, "Never has my calling to be God's workmate here on earth meant more to me than now."

Many began to understand through Aino that our usefulness to God has little to do with our external qualifications, but every-

thing to do with whether we surrender our hearts and wills. She asked us to speak not so much about her at her funeral, but about our calling. She saw life in a wider perspective. "Our life is part of eternity and eternity starts here," she said.

She was sometimes unhappy about the effect the continuous medication and pain had on her nervous system. She suffered when she was not able to relate to other people in the way she would have liked. She was disheartened by her inadequacy and felt totally helpless. "How can I be an instrument of God? How to battle against boredom and negative feelings? The soul is full of sin again and again." And she continued, "I would do well to remember that though I really cannot rely on myself I can nevertheless trust God. That is a gift of grace. It should be part of a normal Christian life and not just of a saint's."

The original few weeks predicted by the doctors had already stretched to a year. The chief nurse said that Aino had confounded the predictions of all the doctors. Aino was sure that the secret was the people praying for her all over the world. One day Stanislaw and Elvira Stomma phoned from Warsaw and told us that 90 nuns in an Ursuline convent had been praying for Aino for nine days.

Aino's relationship with Christ was uncomplicated, "Just think, I don't need to say 'Sir' to Him but just can say 'hello' and He is right there. He speaks to me as he spoke to his disciples." And she wrote, "Remember that Jesus is your best friend. He isn't happy about this situation either but let us together make the best of it. Thanks that in spite of everything, all is well. No matter how things turn out, life is in place!"

She tried not to give in to sadness and melancholy. "Give thanks for everything that the Lord has given in life," she wrote in her notes. "I would not swap my life with anyone. Give thanks at each stage. Give thanks even for this disease. Take it as a gift because it forces you to turn to God."

Aino's temperature now frequently rose to 41°C. She could not swallow even a single drop of water. She asked the doctor if he

had ever seen a similar disease cured. "Never," he answered. "I am not afraid to die," Aino said. "But I am ashamed that I have not completely trusted God with Elina's future."

Summer came. During the last weeks Aino's thoughts were lucid and full of confidence. One day she said, "I can now only live a day at a time, but I can invest in people to my last breath!"

"The worst form of cancer," the doctor commented one day. "I have accepted it," Aino wrote. "I have found great inner peace. I love Christ because He understands the ordinary person. What people really need is peace of mind and soul. Jesus had that because He had the right values and priorities in life. I no longer see death as a dividing border, but I look forward with joy to eternal life. My belief in eternal life has grown. I too will be let in." Once she described a dream she had had, "I saw a white lamb with wool soft as silk. There was distress all around but as you approached it, a great tranquility and sense of protective security filled your inner being." She said of another dream, "There was a great high city on a mountain, just like San Francisco. Above it was an enormous light, and a crystal clear stream ran through it."

At the very end Aino was allowed to pay a short visit home. Two days later, as she stood at the front door, ready to return to hospital she said, "I know that I shall not come home again. May the Lord bless this home."

I had arrived twenty minutes too late at my mother's death bed, and had also only got home after the death of my father and brother. I did not want it to happen again. I stayed with Aino for 36 hours without interruption. Elina was with me and occasionally rested on the ward floor. On her birthday, two days before her death, Aino said, "The Bible has such tremendous promises." The last words she uttered were, "Wonderful to see you and Elina." On the last morning it seemed as if her big bright eyes looked somewhere far and high and she stretched both her arms up as if to catch something. She said no more.

24. And we have plenty of time!

Three years with an ever-weakening mother had been a severe strain on Elina. Her final year at school was now ahead of her and for me the last year of active work in industry.

Nearly unconsciously I had been forced to make up my mind about what was ultimately essential in life. I had always believed in the importance of praying but during the past decades there had often not been enough time. I now felt a strong need to take time not only in the morning or late at night but also in the afternoon, to pray for my collaborators and friends, for clarity of plans, for nations and their leaders. I could not evaluate the consequences, but something in my innermost being confirmed its importance. A certainty grew that God still wanted to be with me and to show the road ahead.

Before we got married Aino had spent four years in Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand. She had greatly wanted to take me there one day. Now it was too late to go together, but in the summer of 1986 Elina and I received a chance to follow in her footsteps. Elina was invited to take part in an MRA training course for young people, mainly from the Pacific and Asia, and I in a series of actions aimed at the mining industry in Australia and the agricultural industry in New Zealand, which were both in a state of conflict.

It was 36°C below freezing when we left Finland and 36°C

above when we arrived in Sydney.

Some years earlier I had got a foretaste of the Australians' free spirit. One day in July, when Aino and I were just setting off for a few days' holiday, the doorbell rang. A friendly man stood at the door with his wife and two children. "We come from Australia," he said. "Have we met before?" I asked. "And how did you find your way here?" "Well, we wanted to see these Nordic lands once in our lives. Then we learnt that a friend of ours had a cousin whose wife's friend's sister had once met a Finnish girl whose name was Aino and who stayed many years in Australia. We managed to trace her new name and address, and here we are – and we have plenty of time." I informed Aino in the kitchen. "This is Australia," she said. "We cannot disappoint them. We must postpone our holiday!"

Like the First Nations of the Americas, the Aboriginal people of Australia and the Maori of New Zealand have been treated shamefully and nearly wiped out by European settlers. In New Zealand, Elina and I took part in a conference initiated by Maori people and held in the residence of the Maori Queen in the small town of Ngaruawahia. The 150 participants slept in the *marai*, big traditional, beautifully decorated one-room houses. The walls were decorated with pictures of the deceased, who play a prominent part in Maori culture.

A group of energetic British women were anxious to organize our sleeping arrangements according to good British principles, with married couples as a "moral barrier" in the middle of each big hall, single men at one end and single women at the other. To their consternation, as the guests streamed in, an overwhelmingly friendly elderly Maori woman opened her arms and invited everyone to choose a mattress. In the night I was woken from my sleep by the sound of two elderly women snoring in rhythm. In the semi-darkness I saw the vertical tail of a cat slowly moving between the rows of sleeping delegates.

The aim of the days in the Queen's *marai* was to build bridges in the troubled Pacific region. It was impossible to harmonize all the contradictory political and religious angles represented.

People pointed at historic injustices: but how far back should one go? The same question has been of burning relevance in Europe and Africa. It is impossible to agree about historical starting - points which are just for all. But before our eyes we saw people from the different Pacific countries having the courage to face themselves and to admit their own and their nation's guilt.

Later, while Elina was busy with her course, I set off with a group to a remote 100 year-old mining community in the middle of the Australian desert. A decision had been taken in Melbourne to close down the mines – thereby sentencing the town to death. A doomsday atmosphere reigned. The mayor of the city, who called himself a "leftist Marxist", invited us to take part in a meeting he had summoned to find a way out. "Consultation – not confrontation", he called the gathering. I told him about a poll which had found that cynicism more than any other factor obstructs creative power in industry. The mayor looked thoughtful. Then he said, "I have never thought about this business of cynicism, but as I ponder it now, I am sure that it is precisely the core of the problem. It is here we have to start."

The company's new managing director also took part in the meeting. He had left a safe, lucrative job to take on the challenge of saving the mining community. Now he decided to devote half his working time to personal discussions with each worker. No executive had bothered to ask them what they thought before. The hopelessness began to yield, the managers and the unions started to cooperate. The economic results slowly improved. A year later we learnt that the top management in Melbourne had called off the closure.

When Elina and I finally returned home at last, after a visit to Japan, Elina said, "My whole perspective on life has changed!" Half a year later she came to my room late one night. There was something on her heart, which she did not immediately want to say. I waited patiently. Then she told me that she had decided to give her life to God, and about the battle which had preceded the decision. I asked her what had led to this. "It was really Australia," she said. She has gone on to choose music as her

career, and cooperates with people in many countries who want to use their artistic gifts to open people's eyes to the spiritual dimension.

In the early Nineties, when I was a board member of the Tanzania Society in Finland, I took part in a discussion with Julius Nyerere, former President of Tanzania. He pointed out that the idea of a new international economic order, unanimously endorsed by the United Nations in 1974, was now surrounded by an air of ridicule. But the burning questions which had given rise to the resolution were as urgent as ever: the distress and hunger, the unjust pricing of natural resources, 15,000,000 children dying in misery every year.

Nyerere had lost faith in the possibility of progress being reached on a governmental level. He had once believed that large-scale industry would pave the way for welfare. Now his strong conviction was that people at the grassroots had to lead the way.

On another occasion, when a European economist said that development aid had to be reduced while the economic crisis lasted, an African responded politely, "We would not object to one day of European economic crisis." What we in Europe have stood for, and that includes the former Marxist countries, has led Africa up a blind alley and so we must accept responsiblility for what has gone wrong. This does not mean telling Africa what to do, but being willing to tackle problems as their equal partners.

In 1980 I was one of a group of people from the Nordic countries who committed themselves to creating a deeper foundation for partnership with Africa. Our initiative had a rather special starting point.

That year some 50 people involved with MRA from all continents met for two weeks in a monastery in the little Italian village of Nemi. We had come together to seek clarity about our common calling, after the painful splits that had taken place. Most of us had gone through a lot and had been forced to reconsider our

own lives and futures. As we prayed and were silent, disappointment and bitterness began to melt away. Accusation and criticism gave way to examination of our own attitudes. There was born in us a willingness to move on, with greater humility than before. One evening those of us from the Nordic countries went to the chapel together. On our knees at the altar we surrendered all that had been, and all that had gone wrong, and we asked God to use us as His tools.

I had taken part in many meetings with businessmen and development specialists who spoke about partnership with Africa, but in private other opinions kept surfacing: even that Africans never would be capable of getting their countries and economies straight, because of "hereditary characteristics". True partnership, we realised in Nemi, must involve the conviction that we from the industrialized nations had something essential to learn from the peoples of the so-called developing world, both as individuals and nations.

We saw our task not as creating new aid organizations but as breaking down the wall of resignation and accusations built by all the failures over the years. Many in Europe argued that the key was now for the African nations to shape the future of the continent themselves – but mutual contacts between different African countries were often difficult. We found that the East African countries in particular valued links with Scandinavia, because we were not associated with the colonial past. We established lively personal bonds with Kenya, Tanzania, the islands of Pemba and Zanzibar, and Uganda.

We aimed to be catalysts, enabling projects to get off the ground. The Danes paved the way for grassroots initiatives by Danish trade unionists; the Swedes and Norwegians focused on agricultural cooperation; we from Finland initiated business training for small-scale entrepreneurs from Tanzania at the Kauhava Entrepreneurial Institute. Each of those who came to Finland passed on what they learnt to five other people in their home villages.

Africa faces major problems – among them ethnic conflict and

corruption – just as we do in Europe. I find it painful to see how many Western businessmen sabotage those Africans who want to be honest. I have met many European businessmen who consider bribes to be "part of African culture" and so pay them to make transactions run smoothly. In some Nordic countries such payments have been tax-deductible. There have even been seminars on how to bribe effectively and elegantly – although, of course, the language used is more refined. One speaks of "special export-promoting measures". Meanwhile I think of friends in Africa who have risked their jobs and businesses by deciding to be honest.

It was over 40°C, with 99 per cent humidity, in Dar-es-Salaam when I celebrated my 70th birthday in 1991. Tanzanian friends had arranged an African banquet. Bishop Elinaza Sendoro, who had stayed in our home in Finland, spoke at length about the partnership which we had been building. "It is a great gift from God to us," he said. His words were the best birthday present I could have been given.

25. Holmenkollen

I had pushed aside the challenge Aino had given me before her death in 1985, "Do you promise to keep your heart open to a new marriage?" She did not want me to live in the past. But at first there was only room for deeply felt loss and thousands of things to be sorted out.

One morning a couple of years later I wrote down in a time of quiet, "Don't rule out Eva". Not so romantic, perhaps, but awakening feelings ripened to conviction. I knew Eva from earlier Nordic gatherings, but not so well. She was Norwegian, impulsive and hot-tempered at times, an artist by nature and in practice. The next summer I met her briefly in Switzerland just before she returned to Norway. I had not thought it possible to fall in love again at my age. But there it was, unmistakeable!

In the autumn of 1988 I decided to travel to Oslo. I thought my chances were fifty-fifty. It would be a drastic step for her at 50 to leave her job, friends, home and move to Finland with its nearly impossible language. She would certainly need a few weeks for consideration. We drove to the top of Holmenkollen, a hill outside Oslo famous for its ski-jumping competition, and there I proposed. To my utter surprise she said yes at once. The reason why was even more astonishing.

Twenty-two years earlier Eva and some other Norwegians had spent an afternoon with Aino and me in our home in Finland. During the discussion around the coffee table a clear, sober

thought had struck her, "That is your future husband." Totally ridiculous, she thought: "Freud would have made something out of that." She was interested in someone else at the time. She decided to forget the thought, which she did, completely, for the next twenty years.

A year after Aino's death Eva was in Tanzania. One day in the interior, just as she was concentrating on photographing a zebra, it was as if a curtain had been pulled aside and vividly, for the first time, she remembered the episode in Helsinki. It was so clear that she spontaneously told a Danish friend who was with her, "Now I know whom I am going to marry!" When I arrived in Oslo she knew why I had come although I had not yet said a word.

During the years preceding World War II, the Oxford Group had had a powerful impact on Norway. Eva's parents were strongly influenced before Eva was born. In all sectors of society, including the church, people experienced reconciliation and new openness and honesty. So many Norwegians repaid taxes they had fiddled that the authorities had to take special measures to accommodate the money streaming into the Treasury. Eva's father, Tarald Hanssen, also gave a considerable "contribution".

Tarald Hanssen was a director of a big company. The chairman of the board – one of Norway's leading industrialists at the time – once asked him why he was interested in the Oxford Group. Tarald replied, "Because it worried me that I was more interested in figures than in people." The chairman looked thoughtfully out through the window for some minutes. Then he said, "I am not particularly interested in people." Later Tarald heard that the chairman had said that Tarald Hanssen must remain on the board as long as possible, because the company needed the element he represented. He retired at the age of 82.

Eva grew up close to Oslo, with five older sisters and brothers. She was three in 1940 and experienced the war from a child's perspective. At that time 400,000 German soldiers were stationed in Norway. She remembers how the grown-ups avoided answer-

ing questions, maybe for fear of the occupying power. Little pitchers can have long spouts. An absent smile was the only answer she got when, at the age of six, she was pondering the problem of evil and the pecking order in hell. Who was the boss, Hitler or the devil? And where did Quisling fit in?

The local school was turned into a headquarters for the Germans, and Eva's class was relocated to the public sauna building on the opposite side of the street. Soldiers patrolled outside the school and the mothers somehow learnt that prisoners were working in its yard. They gave their children food parcels to throw over the barbed wire into the brushwood when the guards were looking in the other direction. Eva remembers the face of a slowly working Norwegian lighting up with amusement. She found the gray, drab group of Russian prisoners she occasionally spotted on the railway track below the school much more frightening.

Tarald Hanssen's firm was Norwegian, but its parent company was American. This meant that he could travel freely to other Nordic capitals where the firm had sister companies. This gave him an understanding of Finland's dilemma. Eva found an old photograph of Mannerheim in discussion with Hitler and asked her father whether the Finns had actually been on the side of Nazi Germany. "You cannot say so," her father replied, "because the Finnish government had to manoeuvre in an extremely precarious situation in a way which you cannot easily criticize." He felt that one should rather question the attitude of some Scandinavian industrialists who had made neutrality a disguise for lack of principle.

When Eva was fifteen, she would abandon sport and friends and rush home whenever an old Fiat was parked outside the gate. During the postwar years a large group of young Norwegians went to work fulltime with MRA in Germany, where the situation had many similarities to Russia in the Nineties. These young people used to visit Eva's parents during their visits home and they talked about German miners in the Ruhr who after years of atheism had discovered a different road to brotherhood and justice

than class war. What they said appealed to Eva. Christian Europe must have lost something essential, she thought – otherwise how could the cruelties of the past decades have been possible?

It was at this time that Eva, without telling anybody, asked God to take charge of her life. She earned the money to travel to Caux during her summer holidays in 1954.

Back at home and school, she began to learn about God's guidance in her life. Her older sister had suffered from mental illness since 1943, and this had left its mark in the home and resulted in a tangle of unspoken feelings. Eva's mother was warm-hearted and intuitive but overworked. She carried a burden of guilt about a serious error the doctors had committed in Eva's sister's treatment. In the silence of one morning Eva jotted down, "Do the dishes more often. Don't be afraid of Mother's bad temper because it has nothing to do with me." Gradually she began to understand more of her own and other people's inner worlds and was able for the first time to talk openly with her parents about things she felt most deeply.

In her early twenties Eva worked for two winters with MRA in London, helping to run the big house in Berkeley Square I had visited in 1947. In those years the waves of independence were sweeping over Britain's former colonies and many Africans, Arabs and Asians involved in their countries' freedom struggles used to come to the house. One day Ghana's President Nkrumah walked in with an entourage of twenty.

In the summer of 1961, after another two years of work at Caux, Eva had to decide about her future – should she get a job or study or go on working fulltime with MRA? She prayed for help to make the right decision and said to God, "Let something of value remain when I die." She felt as if another being was with her in the room saying, "Then you must choose who shall be king in your life, you or I." What she did and where she worked was less important than her relationship to other people and to God.

Next day as she watched some children playing, she had a surprising thought, "The most important thing in the world is the answer to fear." During that period, many MRA workers stayed at

Caux throughout the year. There was often frustration and worry in the atmosphere. Eva sensed that MRA was going to go through some difficult years, and she felt that she did not possess the qualities that were going to be needed. Idealism would not be enough. She still had essential things to learn. It became clear to her that she should return to Norway and get a job.

As the years went by, the question of whether she would get married began to worry her. One day she felt as if Our Lord had put an arm around her shoulders and said, "I have a plan for you, but for the time being I want you unmarried." Sometimes she felt depressed. Yet she knew she had not missed anything which could have been right for her.

Many years later, after her father's death, her mother fell ill and needed support and care. Eva was glad that she was free to help her mother stay in her own home. "My understanding and affection for old people grew," she says. "I am also sure that it was this period of fellowship with my mother which made it possible for me later to uproot myself, and settle in another country."

After her mother's death in 1986, Eva felt too exhausted to go on holiday with her friends. Over Easter she went to the Gudbrandsdalen valley to a retreat for people whose daily work was to help others but who felt burnt out themselves. The simple surroundings encouraged concentration. One question that occupied Eva's mind was whether Jesus could become king of all the parts of her life. Her calling many years ago had been quite clear but she felt that somehow she still held the tiller.

There in the quiet of the mountains two questions entered her mind, which centred on hate and love. A clear thought struck her, "Hasn't the time come to forgive?" Deep down she still carried a bitterness from her childhood. There was also a relationship which she now realized was wrong. In the presence of the priest she surrendered to God both her bitterness and all control of her own future. It was as if her axis had shifted from her own strength to Jesus. She no longer felt she had to brood over her special task: she could be sure that there was a right road, even when she could not see it.

A few days after our trip to Holmenkollen I was back in Finland. Elina was happy to hear my news but not as surprised as I had expected. "Listen, Dad," she said, "eight months ago I had the thought that you were going to marry Eva, although I said nothing about it to you."

After our wedding in Norway we went for a few days' honeymoon to Hardangervidda in the mountains to ski. As a true Norwegian, Eva was superior in the hills. Of course I couldn't refuse to follow her. Finland's honour was at stake. After our first hair-raising descent down an icy hillside, I was naturally disabled for the rest of the honeymoon.

Then Eva packed up, left her job and her home and arrived in Finland. "I believe there is something more in God's mind than just me coming here as your wife," she said. On our rings we had engraved the words which St Paul wrote to his friends in Thessalonica, "He who calls you is to be trusted, He will do it". We had already experienced the validity of the promise, and events in the East gave it wider significance.

Soon we found ourselves involved in tasks which went beyond all own resources.

26. Guilt or innocence

We got married early in 1989, just before the Berlin Wall collapsed. Soon all of East Europe was rocking. For a short period many believed that we were on our way to a new era of stability in the world. An EU official from Brussels, who visited us at that time, said that Europe was going from strength to strength. He seemed very self-assured, and not much concerned about the developing world nor the ethnic problems in Europe. Soon after his visit the Gulf War broke out. Then followed the war in former Yugoslavia, the recession in our part of the world and the conflicts around the Maastricht treaty.

The Communist ideology crumbled away, but it soon became apparent that the old structures of Communism had not disappeared. They lived on through networks of people loyal to each other, and became a basis for later efforts to establish political parties. Their programme was now often nationalism, sometimes in extreme forms. Other political constellations which lacked the old structures were at a disadvantage.

The upheaval in Europe forced Finland into painful self-examination. For the last 40 years, we had tried to hold our own against Soviet endeavours to dominate, with the help of our neutrality. Our politicians had repeated their litany about friendship with the Soviet Union until people got sick of it. Of course, a certain balance in our official language was necessary, but in reality, behind

all the talk of friendship lurked fear, overcautiousness and a desire to ingratiate ourselves with the Russians, who were sometimes surprised at how easily we gave in. Ironically the strongest reactions to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 came not from conservative politicians but from members of the Finnish Communist Party.

Our economic success had been built in part on our bilateral trade agreement with the Soviet Union. The USSR's collapse plunged us into the worst recession in decades. A new closeness to our Baltic neighbours, the working-out of our relations with Russia, a new orientation towards Europe through joining the EU in 1995, our traditional Nordic identity – all these were elements in the search for our future role.

The reshuffle in East Europe also changed Finland's geographical position. We were no longer an "outpost of freedom in the East". Now we were situated in the centre of Northern Europe. In my childhood my father used to travel to Holland through the Baltic countries or Stettin, today Szczecin, in Poland. This old Baltic route opened up again, from St Petersburg through Warsaw and Berlin to Paris. Within a short time St Petersburg–Tallinn–Warsaw became Eva's and my natural sphere of activity.

With shame, we Finns began to take onboard our indifference to what our Baltic neighbours had lived through. One result of the pressure of the Soviet Union and of our self-imposed censorship was that nobody had spoken or written publicly about the Baltic situation. Somehow we had come to accept that the free country of Estonia was only history – even though we could see its coastline every time we flew to Sweden and many of us older ones had visited it as children.

In the beginning of the Forties, 80,000 Estonians had been deported to Russia and Siberia. Thirty thousand never returned. Bishop Rahamägi of Estonia, who had often visited my parents in the Thirties, disappeared without trace. The father of one of our closest friends was deported to the goldmines in Magadan, close to Kamchatka. Thirty years after he died, the Russian

authorities sent a message saying that the cause of his death was that his "heart stopped beating".

Many people in the East expected that the new freedom would have a quick and visible effect on their daily lives. But the dream soon began to evaporate. After years of hardship it is not easy to be patient and continue to trust what one's leaders say. The power of the mafia grew ever stronger, and other problems began to surface. During my business years I could feel fairly sure that it was safe to take a night walk in Moscow or on the outskirts of Leipzig – but not in Central Park in New York. The new freedom in the East provided a chance for criminals and other sinister elements.

I got a small taste of this on a trip to Poland's southern border in 1991. At six in the morning I entered an empty compartment in a train standing in Warsaw's main station. Suddenly three tall men stepped out of the darkness, held me in an iron grip and emptied all my pockets, while I tried unsuccessfully to fight them off. They disappeared as quickly as they had come, with my wallet, passport and tickets.

The train should have left some minutes ago. Could I continue my long journey without documents? No help could be expected from the police. But I did not want to miss the conference I was heading for. What should I do? As I prayed I had the thought to get out onto the platform. As I jumped down I spotted the conductor about to give the signal for departure. Then some 60 metres further along a woman shouted in clear Swedish, "Is that you, Paul?" There on the steps of another carriage was a clergyman's wife from Adelaide in Australia, who I had stayed with during my trip in 1987.

I rushed up to her and explained what had happened. "I have a ticket for a friend who did not turn up," she said. I jumped in and off went the train. To my surprise, I found my passport on the floor of the next carriage. Although all my money had gone I had the comfort of thinking, once I had calmed down, that it would probably find its way into the ailing Polish economy.

As development rolls forward in the former Eastern Bloc, it is tempting to overlook the extent of the inner reconstruction that will also be needed. During Communism thousands of courageous men and women stood up against the regime and came through victorious, but that is not the whole picture of the spiritual situation in those countries.

In 1994 a Russian businessman in St Petersburg told me that "every Russian businessman is going through a colossal psychological restructuring" – and that it was on the inner level that "the front is most bloody and most difficult to break through". The head of a Christian institute confirmed this: "All over the country people are afraid of each other. The war in Russia is now raging within us, and this goes for the Church too. During the Soviet period our souls were burned in an invisible way."

In the West many people believe that when material conditions improve people become more ethical. This axiom is not justified by events. The Finnish Prime Minister touched on this question in 1992. "So many people who have been hit by the depression find themselves not only at an economic but also at a spiritual dead end," he said. "The spiritual crisis is supposed to disappear as soon as the economic situation has eased. Suppose the situation is in fact the opposite. Could it be that the country and its citizens first need to reach spiritual equilibrium before the economic crisis can be cured?"

A 75-year-old friend, Alpo Hukka, the former head of the Finnish Church Mission, was invited to rebuild church life in a Russian city which had once belonged to Finland. He had been born there, gone to school there, and fled westwards with the rest of the inhabitants at the end of the war. After one year's work in Russia, he told me, "We did not grasp how thoroughly the very foundations were destroyed during those years of Communism. Faith was undermined and with it the whole morality of society. This in its turn killed the power of initiative, and the result was a paralyzed society. We should not imagine that the foundations in Russia can be rebuilt quickly. It will take the devoted effort of two generations."

His view was confirmed by a recent investigation on the time span needed to restore the balance of a distorted economy, conducted by Professor Stephane Garelli of the Lausanne Management Institute. It found that if the problems were caused by inflation or a wrong balance of payments, correct measures could change the situation in three years. At least ten years were needed if the cause was technological backwardness. But if the scale of values had been overturned you had to reckon on at least twenty years. Yuri Karyakin, a Dostoyevski specialist and adviser on cultural affairs to Boris Yeltsin said, "We are only at the very beginnings of the spiritual overcoming of Communism."

The question of guilt and innocence, both collective and personal, is of burning relevance in the new East and Central Europe. Not least Stalin's strategy of resettling people has created seemingly insoluble conflicts. Nearly 50 per cent of Latvia's population, and some third of Estonia's, are Russians. Many Estonians have regarded their Russian minority as a potential fifth column.

In 1993 a woman politician expressed her regret that the two communities in Estonia lived with their backs turned on each other. But she argued that after all their traumatic experiences it was psychologically impossible for the Estonians to have confidence in the Russians. She asked for understanding, explaining that the Estonians needed time. "I believe it would do a great deal for the trust between us if there was a clear acknowledgment from official Russian circles that the politics of the past were wrong."

From the Russian side I have received a different version. A Russian priest said heatedly that the Russian nation cannot be blamed for anything because it is sick. "The germ of Communism originated in the West," he pointed out. A Russian editor, living in Estonia, told me, "I have nothing to regret. I was not a member of the Party and I did not want Communism. Besides, it was the Jews who were the first to back the revolution in Russia." His wife interrupted, "I disagree with my husband. We Russians are born imperialists even without Communism. We have always had

a dangerous combination of mysticism and the lust for power within us." But her husband held his ground, "We will only get anywhere if we draw a line across the past and build the future together."

Has it ever been that simple? As an Estonian pointed out, "It is impossible to draw such a line." Only reconciliation on a deeper level has any chance of being permanent.

A woman teacher from St Petersburg told me that the first step towards reconciliation was for "the truth to be told". She said that 60 per cent of the pupils in her city believed that Finland attacked the Soviet Union in 1939, when Stalin and Hitler were still great buddies. Attitudes are influenced by distorted facts. The same thing goes for Estonia. An educated Russian couple in Tallinn told me adamantly that the Estonian government had asked the Soviet Union to take over the country in 1940 in order to protect it.

The Russian Commissioner for Human Rights and MP, Sergei Kovalyev, said at Caux in 1996, "When we are not prepared to face our past we cannot see the future clearly." Kovalyev said that his people are "deprived of any idea of national guilt. We look for the guilty everywhere except within ourselves." And he added, "Now we see ourselves as victims. Without this sense of national guilt I don't think any evolution toward law or human rights is possible." He eventually resigned his post as Human Rights Commissioner over Russia's policies in Chechnya.

Until quite recently Russia and the Russians represented for most Estonians the major threat to their new freedom. In 1997 I took part in organizing a seminar in Estonia for representatives of all the Baltic Sea countries, where an Estonian professor spoke of the fear which history had ingrained in his compatriots. "Who will conquer us next? We have always lived with a big neighbour and we have automatically identified Russians with Communists." He was searching for something deeper. His main concern now was the collapse of values and the resulting consequences for society. "Until recently it was unpopular and even dangerous to talk about social values, as this reminded people of

Communism. Now values must be restored. Building confidence is more important than making money." A Russian professor responded by calling for a united effort to make Christian values common to all the countries around the Baltic Sea.

Repentance and forgiveness are personal things and cannot be turned into a method. Liisa Pulkkinen, the wife of my old friend and colleague Otto, grew up on a farm on the Russian-Finnish border which had belonged to her family for 500 years. The new border drawn in 1944 cut right through it, turning a large farm into a smallholding. The family house was situated in the forbidden military zone at the very border, and was observed continually by the Russian guards in their watchtower. Liisa's parents were permeated with bitterness, and it also took root in their children.

When Liisa came to Caux in 1991 she stiffened at the sight of a large group of Russians. "I don't want anything to do with them," she exclaimed. Even though she had grown up on the border she had never personally met Russians before. One day, as she heard some Russians describe what they had suffered, she realized that *schadenfreude* and hardness would only lead to new conflicts. God gave her a new love for the Russians and a wish to become a bridgebuilder. When she told her brothers on the home farm about her experience, a new attitude began to take root there too.

When Liisa described this experience at Caux, a Russian teacher from Estonia burst into tears. Some months later, back in Estonia, this woman became mortally ill. Her husband, who had been an atheist, began to pray for her every day. Six months later I was in their home at her birthday celebration. The doctor had just given her a clean bill of health. "This morning I plucked up courage and did what I knew I had to do," she told her guests. "For the first time in my life I went to the priest in my Orthodox church and confessed all the sins which had burdened me. Now I want to have a part in rebuilding Estonia."

Many in the West claim that the future of Russia depends on

whether the West gives adequate aid. But is it that simple? Dostoyevski once wrote, "We know that we Russians can never become West Europeans, that we are not able to force ourselves into a western way of life which Europeans have created on their own national basis, but which is alien to us." More than 100 years later Solzhenitsyn expressed similar views: "We have never based our hope on the West and for that matter should never do so. If we want to become free, it must be through our own self-help. In the West will and reason have been weakened by too superficial a welfare."

The East-West conflict is not a product of the Cold War. It has held an essential place in the Russian national consciousness for more than 1,000 years. Political manipulation will not create a foundation for unity: this can only come through a commitment that goes far deeper.

27. The baron of Monrepos

In June 1994, exactly 50 years after the war came to an abrupt end for me, Eva and I travelled right across the Karelian isthmus, once Finnish and now part of Russia. Memories welled forth. Through the bus windows, we saw kilometre after kilometre of half-collapsed trenches, tank barriers, pits, all bearing witness to the biggest battle in all Nordic war history. Nearly a quarter of a million Russians and Finns had been killed or wounded during that summer, including three of my cousins and many of my comrades.

We were on our way to the 600-year-old Konevitsa monastery, on an island in Lake Ladoga, which had also formerly been a part of Finland. The devastation of the monastery during the Soviet epoch could not hide the beauty of the old buildings, which foreign volunteers were helping the Russians to rebuild.

On the mainland close by, the old, once Finnish, fortress city of Käkisalmi – now called Priozersk – was celebrating its 700th anniversary. Hundreds of Finns had come for the occasion. Russian and Finnish singers performed and the Russian mayor spoke. To end the celebration everyone on the walls of the fortress sang the Finnish national anthem. Only a few years before this would have been inconceivable. The day was an expression of ordinary peoples' readiness for a new neighbourliness.

There is more scepticism in other parts of Russian society, not

least within the Orthodox Church – and perhaps with good reason. One day I was strolling in the centre of St Petersburg when a giant banner caught my eye. On it "JESUS" was written in huge letters, with an invitation to a mass meeting arranged by an American Christian group. Some Christian movements have sailed arrogantly into Russia and, consciously or unconsciously, belittled a religious tradition which not even 70 years of Communism could annihilate.

Many Protestant movements focus exclusively on preaching and witness and reject other channels of mediating God's power and love. The unique liturgy of the Orthodox church with its icons and its family customs helped to keep the Christian flame alive during the tyranny of Communism. At the other extreme, some in the West are so impressed by Orthodox mysticism and ritual that they do not see beneath the pious surface. An Orthodox leader told me, "Our weak point in the Orthodox tradition has been our inability to work out our salvation here on earth as well as in heaven."

There are, of course, fundamental disagreements between the different branches of Christianity. If the most important thing for us is which confessional line we profess, we are on a collision course. But if our primary concern is how our faith and spiritual values can influence the life of our nation, then we have a basis for common action. "Learning from others need not mean losing our own faith and forms of worship," says Grigori Pomerants, a Russian thinker and essayist. "Fear of dialogue betrays a lack of faith in our own belief and system."

A young professor of Russian history told me during a discussion in St Petersburg that it was nearly impossible for the younger generation to be optimistic. "A re-Christianization of Russia is the only hope," he said. But is his hope at all realistic? Rather than trying to look into the future, I am tempted to go back into history to seek an answer to that question.

The return journey from Konevitsa brought us to Viborg, once the second biggest city of Finland, which was ceded to Russia

after the Winter War. Viborg was once one of the most cosmopolitan cities of Northern Europe, a dynamic trade and cultural centre at the gateway to Russia, where one could hear Finnish, Swedish, Russian, French and German being spoken in the streets.

Our bus stopped outside Viborg at the gate of Monrepos, which was the estate of the Nicolay family during the 19th century when Finland was a grand duchy under the Tsar. Russians and Finns were restoring the building. As we walked past the scaffolding and into the magical park, which I still remembered from a visit as a schoolboy, I thought about Baron Paul Nicolay, who often stayed with my uncle Aleksi Lehtonen during his visits to Helsinki.

Paul Nicolay's father was a Russian ambassador and so Paul became familiar with the main European cities at an early age. As a young government official, Paul was deeply marked by a Christian awakening started by an Englishman, Lord Radstock. He gave up his civil service career and for the next ten years devoted himself to the needs of prisoners in Russia, working closely with the Finnish prison reformer, Mathilda Wrede.

In 1899, in Helsinki, Nicolay met the American John Mott, leader of the World Student Christian Federation, which was already active on all continents. Mott asked Nicolay about starting similar work in Russia. "Russia is the land of great opportunities," he replied. "If we are just persistent in our prayer, the doors will open."

The Russian university world was in a state of ferment. Most students had turned their backs on orthodoxy and wanted to break their bonds with the Church and with God. For those who saw the flagrant injusticies around them politics became the new religion and revolution the aim. Others, who neither accepted the old system nor the idea of revolution, gave themselves up to hedonistic pleasure. There was a wave of suicides – just as there was in Russia in the early 1990s.

Nicolay's health was fragile, but nothing could hold him back once a vision had gripped him. His work soon reached most of

the great universities in the Russian empire, and he was elected Vice-President of the World Student Christian Federation. He became a sought-after speaker at student conferences in Oxford and many other Western cities.

His aim was not to proselytise for any particular church grouping but rather to give the students a purpose for living which would last to the end of their lives. He believed that through the students a new thinking could take root in Russia. He was convinced that no system could save Russia if the country lacked people of inner quality. He knew too that western structures were not the answer for Russia; his country had to find its own way.

Nicolay urged the students to dare to face the demands of the Sermon on the Mount, and to see themselves as if in an "incorruptible mirror". He emphasized listening in silence, purity of motives, the full surrender of the will and daring obedience to the steps God had made clear. "The quiet time must be a real concentration around the only thing necessary, a meeting with the living God," he said. When Nicolay was dying, Aleksi Lehtonen came to see him. Nicolay told him, "Hang on with an iron grip to the morning watch!" When Lehtonen later met the Oxford Group, he saw it as a continuation of the road Nicolay had laid out.

Nicolay's success soon met with growing opposition, particularly from some of the Orthodox clergy. But many secular leaders appreciated the growth of responsibility and honesty that followed his activities. Nicolay continued his work far into 1918, while Lenin's revolution was sweeping through the country.

One week before his death in 1919 Nicolay wrote to Mott that anarchy and massacres had forced him to cease all organized work. It was doubtful whether any of his centres in Russia still functioned. His work was in ruins, but he rejoiced at the complete turnaround which had taken place in the attitude of the Orthodox leaders to his aims. Nicolay finished his letter, "You see that I only have meagre news this year, but it is the darkness before dawn. Christ's Kingdom can never perish!"

What had been sown continued to live in the cities, in the coun-

tryside and in the concentration camps. Nicolay's closest collaborator, Professor Vladimir Marzinkovski, describes this in a remarkable book from the 1920s which I came upon 70 years later in St Petersburg. Marzinkovski was a lecturer in the history of Russian literature and later professor of ethics at Samara University. In 1913 he gave up his career to devote all his time, without any regular income, to work with Nicolay in Russia's universities, and he continued this work after Nicolay's death. He was imprisoned many times – and somehow turned even these prisons into centres of new life. Finally in 1923 he was deported.

Nicolay's strength lay in his burning interest in helping individuals. "I want originals, not copies," he used to say. He knew from experience that a change which does not touch the innermost citadel of a person cannot last.

No theory can replace the bridgebuilding effect of a genuine human experience. I gave a Russian businessman in St Petersburg a copy of Aino's book in English. When I visited him again some months later, he unexpectedly put a Russian manuscript on the table and told me that he had translated Aino's book without asking for my permission. "Don't worry about that," I said, "but tell me why you have translated it."

The businessman had no background of faith, but he had been struck by how Aino had wrestled with the meaning of life when her external framework was collapsing. He told me that both his parents had died of cancer at an early age, and that he had been gripped by a gnawing fear that the same thing would happen to him and his only child. "In this book I found an answer to my fear. I had to share my discovery with others, so I translated and duplicated the book." His sister, a cancer specialist, had been giving it to her patients.

When the book was later formally published in St Petersburg, there was an amazing response. The printworkers read it and asked for copies for their friends. A teacher read sections to his twelve- to sixteen-year-old pupils, none of whom had any Christian background. Afterwards they had half an hour's discus-

sion – and some of them talked about the lesson to their parents, who had heavy burdens to carry. "There is a Friend who can help you as well, Dad," one boy had said. At his pupils' request, the teacher invited an Orthodox priest to the school.

"This is not something pressed on us from the West," another reader said, "but something straight from the heart of an ordinary person, an experience which knows no ethnic or geographic boundaries." The publisher was soon busy with a second edition, to fulfil orders from Kamchatka and Sachalin.

Ever since Eva moved to Finland, we have been increasingly involved in developments in Russia and the Baltic. Given Finland's 800-year enmity and fear towards Russia, and my own wartime experiences, it has been remarkable to work with Russians for shared aims. Eva has been learning how to paint icons and finding in their symbolism and beauty a spiritual quality of great value for modern people.

Early one morning in 1998 we stood on the deck of a small barge ploughing through the waves of the bleak White Sea towards the Solovetsk monastery on an island not far from Archangelsk. These were the waters my grandfather sailed 100 years ago. For more than half the year Solovetsk is in the grip of ice.

After a couple of hours we began to discern the towers and onion-shaped domes of the monastery slowly rising above the horizon. The monastery was founded in 1429 and over the years became a unique spiritual and cultural centre for the Russian empire. Its library held 20,000 volumes in 25 languages, and a pilgrimage there was a lifetime's dream for many Russians. It was also a military centre, which was attacked by the Swedish fleet in 1571 and 1701, and by the British during the Crimean War.

For centuries – both under the Tsars and under the Soviet Union – Solovetsk has also been a place of deportations. It was a main supplier of slave labour for the Stalin canal and, according to Solzhenitsyn, the prototype for the Gulag archipelago.

Beside me on the deck stood the grandson of one of Solovetsk's most famous prisoners in the 1920's, Pavel Florensky, who was a contemporary and kindred spirit to Marzinkovski. Florensky taught theology and philosophy at Moscow University and the Spiritual Academy, and received an honorary doctorate from the Vatican Gregorian University. He was also a mathematical genius, artist and chemist, and while he was in prison he developed an iodine plant which used seaweed. In his time, it is said, no place had a higher concentration of intellectuals than Solovetsk – 23 archbishops and bishops and hundreds of academics were imprisoned there.

Florensky was finally executed. His main work, *The Pillar and Foundation of Truth,* made him internationally famous. Yet his greatest creation was not his writings but his life. It has been said that he more than anyone else incarnated the spiritual renaissance which preceded the revolution of 1917.

His grandson, also called Pavel Florensky, puts in many weeks a year in archaeological work on Solovetsk. He describes the island as his "true home": "Here where my grandfather spent so many years I feel that spirit, body and soul are one." When the archives in Moscow were opened, he studied those relating to the Gulag prisoners. "The reading was so horrible that my hair turned white," he says. "And yet the endless misery and tragedy is only secondary. I see a parallel to the martyrs in the Colosseum in Rome, whose sacrifice was the seedbed of a tremendous spiritual advance. I am convinced that we will see this happen again."

Long ago, I found an answer to my unconquerable longing to live for something bigger than my own success. In the beginning I experienced this as actions and work. As time went on I began to see it as a calling to be a channel for God's will in the continuing historical process in which we find ourselves. I experienced the power of silence and prayer to open the gates to inner freedom.

A young man asked me one day in Australia, "Tell me, can you really trust God?" I told him that I had often got into difficulties by following my own impulses, rather than trusting God. But that

when I had consciously chosen to trust and obey as far as I understood, I could not point to a single instance where God had failed me.

But there is a further important issue. What do I expect? What limits do I put on what I believe God can do? And why?

In our home in Helsinki, we have a painting by Lennart Segerstråle which depicts a flock of birds flying higher and higher towards new spheres of light. Some birds are lagging behind, some fall down, but the journey goes on. It is not the individual birds that catch your eye, but their common endeavour.

Segerstråle's painting communicates something which has become living reality for me over the years. Every man and woman is called to be the carrier of part of the truth. Everyone has a life task that is unique. No one else's efforts can replace it. We are not qualified to place our fellow human beings in a rank of importance, nor to make the final judgement on what is of lasting value in our own lives.

But if we follow the truth which has been entrusted to us, and invest our life and our creative power in the highest we have seen, we become part of a greater reality which we lack the capacity to grasp. And life becomes an adventurous journey.

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