

THE ARTIST THE CREATOR & THE WORLD

Artists are individuals. Painters, writers, weavers, poets, musicians, actors—all see themselves as unique. All are unique. All have something unique to give to the world. But does an artist carry responsibility only for his own talent? Or is there a wider responsibility, for his audience, for society, for a world which is suffering from spiritual famine? Alexander Solzhenitsyn thinks there is. 'Friends, let us try and help, if we are worth anything at all,' he says. 'Writers and artists . . . can vanquish the lie.' If this responsibility exists can talented individualists find a way to carry it together?

TO LOOK FOR the answers to these questions, and to decide what to do about the answers, fifty artists from all over Europe came to the Moral Re-Armament assembly at Caux in Switzerland for the first ten days in August. The theme of their conference was

'The Artist, the Creator and the World'. They represented Art in all its diversity.

Among them were actors and playwrights from Britain and France, Swedish and Norwegian painters and textile artists, French musicians, film-makers and a poet from Germany, journalists and publishers from Britain and the Nordic North, Swiss artists and theatre personalities, one of England's leading potters. Within the framework of the world assembly, they met every day to discuss the role of the artist in the world, and talk about the commitment behind their work.

The discussions were as varied as the artists taking part. Victor Sparre, the Norwegian painter and stained-glass artist, chaired a session on the theme 'One word of truth outweighs the whole world', and later presented a chapter from his new book, *The stones will cry out*. Waldemar Lorentzon, surrealist painter from Sweden, showed slides of his paintings and talked about his discovery of faith as a young man and its outgrowth in human relationships. British author Garth Lean led a discussion on the written word and the responsibility of writers for people who read their work. Architecture was examined from the same angle: slides of Corbusier's buildings were shown by his niece, Kerstin Rääf, herself an artist of standing in Sweden, who described his search for the meeting place between human beings and the buildings they have to live in, and how this search created a revolution in architecture.

The paintings of the Finnish artist Lennart Segerstråle were studied, with their emphasis on the battle between light and dark, good and evil. Two textile artists from Norway and Sweden, Molle-Cecilie Major and Gerd Ekdahl, showed their very different styles and spoke together about their common aim, to offer people faith and hope through the works they create. Michael Leach, of the English pottery-making family, talked about his work and that of his father, Bernard Leach, and the link created through the craft of pottery with the people of Japan.

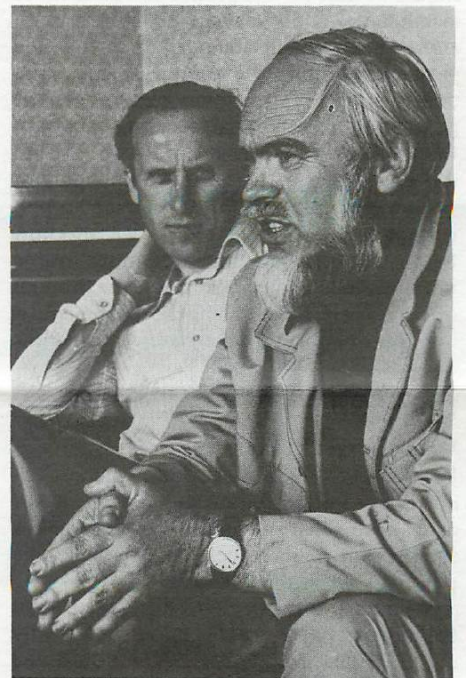
In the theatre, musicians from France, Norway, Sweden, England and Switzerland gave a classical concert; Tony Jackson, who has played Ringo in *Give a Dog a Bone* for three seasons in the Westminster Theatre, headed the cast of a revue called *The Actor and the Word*; and there was a first reading of Jean-Jacques Odiere's new play in French, *La fillette en rose*, in which a Modigliani painting plays a central role.

The results of such a conference are the intangibles: the deeper examination of personal motives, in a calling which attracts many pressures; the decisions to leap in faith into wider responsibility for society; the growth of trust and friendship between people of immensely varied backgrounds and cultures, and the discovery that out of such variety can be created a common commitment, when the standard is the absolute and the aim a remade world. These are seeds which will grow, if they are fed and watered, exposed to sun and air.

The following pages give a summary of the

**NEW
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NEWS**

FOR MORAL RE-ARMAMENT



Victor Sparre and, behind, Hugh Williams
Photo: Maillefer

subjects discussed and conclusions reached. Further conferences are planned for the coming year.

AJH

NEW LIFE FOR ART

Grosvenor Books 35p postage 12p

contributors include Victor Sparre and Lennart Segerstråle

'The renewal of society starts with the renewal of the artist as he takes up his mission as surgeon, prophet and priest for this age'

TRIBUNE DE CAUX What is the aim of a conference which brings together artists of so many different disciplines?

Hugh Williams. All of us, in one way or another, want to use our art to do something for people. We are also concerned with the situation in the world and want to do something for it with our art, maybe in the long term, maybe also in the short term. An international assembly, where we are faced day by day with the issues in Africa, Asia and Latin America, is a good atmosphere in which to look at art and the world and ourselves.

Tribune. What do you think is the relationship between art and the state of the world? Can artists really do anything about it?

Victor Sparre. Well, if anyone can, we should be able to. People are more and more losing faith in politicians. Our future is more and more being decided by forces outside parliaments and 'the establishment'. The undercurrent of irrational feelings in the population is often the deciding factor in what politicians can and cannot do. Within this undercurrent there is always an elite of people who think, who shape and lead it in certain directions. These days we all know that the mass media are much more important than before, therefore the thought of the artists who are using the mass media is also very important. They are directing the flow of the undercurrent.

Tribune. But in what direction?

Victor Sparre. That is the great question. Politicians, organisations, ideological movements often underestimate the power of art itself. That is why Solzhenitsyn makes such a point, in his Nobel Prize speech, of the power of art in the world.

When a whole people loses its soul, then the dictator has his best chance. That is why under Hitler and under Stalin, both the German and the Russian people were completely without consciousness of a soul. As nations, they lived by greed or by fear. If an individual becomes the slave of a dictator or an ideology, he loses his personality, he dies. To keep a soul alive you need to give it food, not orders. So now, when pressures bear down on the individual from all sides and our societies are so controlled, art may be the last line of defence for the human soul.

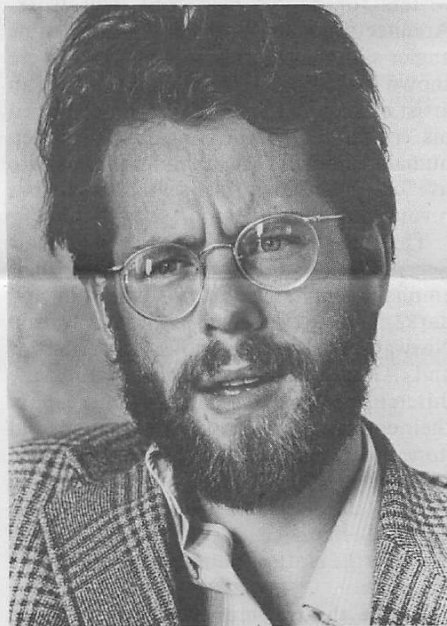
Hugh Williams. The reason why politicians are finding such difficulty in dealing with the problems of our time is that these problems are a result of generation after generation of materialism. The selfishness of the ordinary person in the affluent Western countries has created inflation, pollution and the economic and social crisis we are in. Unless we can reverse that materialistic trend with other values — and after all this is the artist's role, with the intellectual and philosopher, to establish values — the politicians won't be able to do their work at all. I see this as a very great role of art. This fact that this thing with the horrible name of 'mass media' has

accelerated this process over the last thirty or forty years means that the reverse trend can also be accelerated.

Tribune. Isn't one function of art to liberate people within themselves, so that then new structures can grow up round them?

Victor Sparre. When a group of people want to dominate whole nations and put them into a particular box, of course they are very afraid of creativeness, because it is a danger to them. They want people who don't think. Art is something that comes from you when you are free. You cannot order a man to be an artist. You can order him to be a slave. But you can only give him freedom to be an artist. So it is indissolubly linked with the fundamental question of liberty.

Hugh Williams. Egon Karter, the producer from Basel, said a very interesting thing to me after the first two days of our conference: 'I can already see the fruits of this conference. You can't tell artists not to paint this or not to write that — all the negative things that we complain about. What we



Jonathan Sparey

have got here is artists who feel encouraged to write differently, to paint differently — that is the answer to the wrong values we are offered. If a group of people like this decide they are going to work differently, you've already got an answer beginning to appear.'

Tribune. But what do you mean by writing or painting differently?

Hugh Williams. We had an interesting example the other day, when the Swedish painter Waldemar Lorentzon showed us, with slides, the development of his art. We saw the crises in his life, the search of a young man, the confusion, the chaos, the doubts; then came the moment when he found a faith and a purpose in life. And from that moment you began to see paintings which spoke of reconciliation.

Tribune. You could really see a different

From Tribune de Caux
Round

THE ARTIST THE CREATOR

Tribune de Caux gathered some of the participants and their ideas and conclusions. The Norwegian painter and glass windows he has created in several modern buildings in London, is the author of several plays, including 'The Glass House'. Ingrid Yden-Sandgren, journalist and author of several writing books for children. Jonathan Sparey, an actor and composer of works of Shostakovich.

style, a different spirit in his work?

Victor Sparre. Definitely. But, Hugh, when you tell the story that way it sounds so easy! Life itself is so much richer than we can put into words.

Tribune. It is relatively easy to see how a creator of art, in a painting or in the theatre, can translate his aim into his art. How do you see it as a musician, Jonathan?

Jonathan Sparey. Sometimes we take our art too seriously, and we need to laugh at ourselves a little more. We are sometimes too much in awe of art, and worship it as a substitute for God. It is a job of work to be done, and mustn't be thought of as a separate part of life. It's like sleeping, eating, talking.

I played in a show for three years. If you play the same thing five hundred times, you get fed up. You don't even want to listen to music any more. Then I've had a year with a quartet. I am enjoying my playing much, but still I'm not really meeting people.

They are all very moved, but then they go home and they're just like they were before. I would like to see a group of dedicated musicians travelling like shows do, and meeting people and talking with them. That seems to me a way we could have an outreach into the world. I would give up my job to do that.

Then there is this question of honesty. I was shocked the other day to discover that I can be very dishonest in my playing and still move people.

Tribune. What do you mean?

Jonathan Sparey. I can put in a glissando and I know it will go straight to someone's heart, and yet to me it means nothing. I'm sure a lot of musicians are like that. It always surprises me how with one instrument, different people playing it can get a completely different sound. I think the sound you make is what you are. If you make a hard sound, it

ARTIST & THE WORLD

... at the end of the artists' conference and asked for
Victor Sparre is known particularly for the stained
Scandinavian churches. Hugh Steadman Williams,
... *The Fire and Return Trip*, and BBC radio plays.
... from Stockholm, is at the moment concentrating on
... English violinist, is a specialist in interpreting the

technically. This is the adventure of creating, to explore new fields of the Spirit.

Ingrid Yden-Sandgren This is what made me interested in the lives of the saints. My country needs inspiring literature for children. The ideal of children in Sweden today is the comics and some rather 'wild' books — not things which make you want to live differently. So I wrote a book about Saint Birgitta, who was a Swedish saint and a remarkable woman, interesting both for grown-ups and for children. Then we wrote a play, and then made a record, and they are used quite a lot in schools. The next person I studied was Saint Francis of Assisi, and we have the same thing — a book, a play, songs. But that is only the fringe of what I long to do for Sweden.

In the last few years we have had small drama groups, amateur and professional, doing productions for schools for ideological reasons — short, very good plays against American imperialism, against capitalism, for sexual freedom. At the moment we have no alternative to these.

... is because you are a hard person. I know it's true on the violin, and even more so with the piano.

Tribune So a hard person can't actually make a warm sound?

Jonathan Sparey I don't think so.

Victor Sparre I think this honesty is one basic thing about all creation and all freedom. A work which is not honest is bad art, most people will agree.

Tribune You mean that art must express what the artist really thinks and feels himself, whatever anybody else thinks?

Victor Sparre Most art comes from a widening of your own personality. But I think there is an even greater art, which you see very seldom, and that is when you empty yourself of your personality and something greater takes its place — you can call it God or whatever you want. When you look at a Rembrandt, you know there is something more there than Rembrandt. Real art goes beyond the personality of the artist. It means forgetting yourself and opening yourself to something much greater. This is the mystery of art, and of life. Artists are the ones who should lead their fellow-men into this mystery, because it is the richest reality we can all touch.

Tribune Do you consider that as your own responsibility?

Victor Sparre Every time I have a blank canvas in front of me, I am scared. I am always tempted to paint something I know I can paint, something I have done before. I easily fall into a pattern which shuts off my creativeness. To be creative you have to get rid of all your prejudices, your doctrines, your theories on how things should be, and let the fresh wind of the Holy Spirit blow through you. I have to ask God to give me the courage to create the thing He wants of me, even if I don't know how to do it



Ingrid Yden-Sandgren

That is why I dream of creating a group or several groups who would bring other ideas into the schools, on a completely professional basis.

Tribune Since we have got on to the subject of theatre — what do you think, Hugh, as a playwright?

Hugh Williams The more I write, the more I come to believe that if people are going to change, they have got to *want* to change — they have got to be moved by the emotions in their hearts. With my writing I am trying to get people to the point where they say, 'I would like to be different.' Not that we give them all the answers, but that we give them a choice. And then it is up to them.

Tribune People sometimes say that an artist who has a definite aim loses his inspiration for the sake of propaganda. What do you

think?

Victor Sparre We can't give answers to people. The only thing we can do is to open up what is going on inside us. We were just talking about the saints. We often have quite a wrong picture of what a saint is. A saint is not a person who lives a perfect life, but a person who is fighting the devil in himself. Art comes out of the fight going on inside a person. In so many artists you have this colossal contradiction — more than in other people, actually. In my heart there are a barbarian and a refined aesthetic, and these things fight each other madly in me. I can't moralise about this fight, I can only show it as it is and put it on a stage or make a painting of it.

Tribune So where is the dividing line between art and propaganda?

Victor Sparre They have nothing to do with one another at all. To moralise for Communism or for Moral Re-Armament is hopeless — no one responds to it. I still laugh at the exhibitions of paintings I saw in Budapest. They put a lot of red in the paintings, but it doesn't change anybody.

Hugh Williams In terms of theatre, it has everything to do with reality and honesty. In plays you have to create characters, and a real character in a real situation can only say or do one thing. If you try to make them say or do something else, the audience sees through it immediately.

Tribune Doesn't the artist need to have made some basic decision in his own spirit between good and evil? You say an artist must just let everything come out. But there are some who have deliberately chosen to live with evil.

Victor Sparre This is a very important point. Evil men can create good art, which is real and effective. But artists must learn to know what spiritual forces are moving man and the world, both evil and good, and then you've got to decide what you are going to follow. Then you don't need to say, 'You should choose the good one.' You can just show it, as the truth and part of reality.

Hugh Williams The writer has to make conscious choices himself all the time. You create characters—what sort of characters? You put them in a situation—what sort of situation? Then there is the conclusion—what do you want to leave people with at the end?

Tribune So you mean that the artist needs an aim in his life rather than in his art?

Victor Sparre Yes—we may be artists, but above all we are human beings, and in our life we need an aim and we need to make moral decisions. We live with other people. I have a wife, I have children. There are a thousand decisions I must make every day. We have the choice of whether we will follow the guidance of God or of the devil.

*Interview by Jean-Jacques Odier,
Ailsa Hamilton and Finn Harald
Wetterfors*

Photos: Danielle Maillefer

Marie-José Orphelin, French violinist:

I know that sometimes I touch the absolute with the tip of my finger. I also know that the life I lead every day does not match this absolute, and that it needs to. I am sure this has a bearing on the state the world is in. Perhaps this is why we have all come here.

Waldemar Lorentzon, Swedish surrealist painter and member of the Halmstad Group:

My thought is to make contact with the younger generation, who envy us because we can always sell everything we paint, we are always in the press, we are an obstacle to their advance. It will be very exciting to see what happens, whether I have enough love and understanding.

Michael Leach, English potter:

Are the crafts comparable to works of fine art? In the last fifty years there has been a significant deepening in appreciation of the works of the hand for use — but not for use only, because a functional object which is also beautiful has the potential of a spiritual, moral, life-giving force.

Egon Karter, Swiss actor and for many years Director of the Komödie Theatre in Basel:

I would dare to compare this conference with the European Security Conference in Helsinki, because here as there the attempt is being made to find new and better ways of peacefully building a better world for humanity. Here as there many people have doubts and ask questions. But only the person who dares to make a new start will reap results. Only the person who dares to tackle life with patience, perseverance, trust and faith can hope for success. The desert cannot be made arable from one day to the next. To make the stony earth fruitful takes decades of tireless work, and many obstacles have to be overcome with faith.

It is easier to work with materials than it is to change people. Matter submits to man. Wood submits to the sculptor, earth submits to the farmer. Man, who is created as an individual, is not so easy to change. Apart from thousands of types of education, apart from his languages and his environment, the differences of political systems and religions, man also invariably possesses his own opinion. He is a mixture of ideals and materialist ideologies.

All these things stamp the personality of an individual, and there are millions of individuals on our planet. So is it surprising that our world has until now been dominated by violent ideas, by wars and by despair? Is it surprising that the word has not come into its own?

There is only one form of victory which

needs to be recognised, and that is the victory of the word. Victory through the word, by means of dialogue, is the one way of reaching understanding. The word passes on thoughts from person to person. The word is the means of finding a conviction and of finding understanding.

Under the guise of Art a large number of writers, film and television producers, theatres and periodicals are producing things which are poisoning the world. Art is free, and has to remain free. This is a commandment for every creative activity, and its interpretation cannot be controlled and cannot be violated. So the only chance to relieve these pressures on art is to offer something better and to spread what is good, true, genuine and simple.

Are we artists really more endowed with grace than the mass of humanity? Are we who pass on art in one form or another really any better than our fellow men? Does the artist have a privileged position and a closer



relationship to God? I would say that the artist, like all who have an intellectual or a creative calling, is a person who is searching, discovering things and searching for knowledge. But it would be presumptuous if we did not recognise that a doctor, a judge, a gardener or a craftsman is also a sensitive and articulate person.

Every person who is striving for truth and looking for it, everyone who wants to hear and see, will also find. God reveals Himself to all of them. The person who longs for purity is also given a vision of God.

Is it desirable to have a final goal for our conference? There has been a richness of new thoughts already, new discoveries, new insights. Perhaps that is good, because a goal means an end. We need to have partial results following on partial results. We need to give space to every new thought, and that means constant, never-ending growth. That is a development without an end. We need victory upon victory of the spirit, and this is passed on by the power of Art.

Pierre de la Motte-Rouge, French violinist:

To live in harmony with oneself and with others is not an impossible dream, because we have lived like that here for several days, with a group of fifty artists of different races, countries and disciplines. We have decided to work and fight, each in his own domain, against hatred, and lies and to live the truths we believe in, while respecting and understanding other people. Only a renewal inspired by faith in God can help us to create a better future for everyone.

Gerd Ekdahl, Swedish tapestry artist:

Why dare to be hurt? Why take that risk over and over again? Because the children of the earth are crying. The earth is being destroyed and people are arming for war. That is why I wanted to meet you all here.

It is a daily battle to trust God, to decide to love people. This is where creation happens. Nothing is more satisfying or more creative than the experience of helping each other to find new life.

God creates the artists needed for the time they live in. In Sweden there are masses of young people who want to do something about the world situation. Now is the time for God to speak through the artist who dares to re-think everything and to create what is needed for these times.

Moral Re-Armament and the crisis of intellectuals

—headline in 'Die Tat'

Walter Maas, German poet and author, in an article about the artists' conference wrote in 'Die Tat', Zurich:

“The discussions revolved round the question whether the intellectual committed to MRA who is at grips with the current problem of peace and reconciliation between nations should be content with a purposeless art.

The situation facing intellectuals in Western Europe is tragic enough ... Genuine humane impulses appear to be lacking everywhere. It does seem the time to deal with the spiritual emptiness that is being recognised by the more perceptive as a painful gap.

The flags of political ideologies hang limp, the trumpets of social change give an uncertain note and intellectuals are often faced by a heap of broken ideals ...

MRA rejects the changing of society by using Art as propaganda, but it recognises that Art is an essential means to change people. The search is continuing for the most effective and appropriate means.”