

# **YOUTH SPIRITUALITY**

## **- A COMMON JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY**

**EUROPEAN SECRETARY'S REPORT 1997/98**

**to the**

**EAY GENERAL ASSEMBLY, MAY 1998**

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### **PART I: YOUTH SPIRITUALITY - A COMMON JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY**

#### **1 Journeys of Discovery**

Dear Friends

I freely admit it: I do not belong to that sporty group of famous EAY joggers. You probably know that to nowadays become an EAY President, an EAY Treasurer or even an Executive Secretary you simply *must* be a marathon runner or at least a fast jogger - or do a solemn oath to develop into such during your term of office.

Every morning at six or six thirty already, these brave guys jump out of their beds, fit and fresh. And then they run. They run fast! - At least that's what they tell us afterwards. When I do my last snore, the show is already over and you can hear them singing under the shower. I really admire them!

But I know that my sport must look differently. I want to remain seated while doing it. That's why I chose bicycling.

Of course, never on one of these light and fast machines on which Tony Rominger or Miguel Indurain flash through the landscape. No, my grand-father, who was a bicycle mechanic, gave me already as a boy one of these heavy, indestructible touring bikes. He probably knew these would fit best my more solid type of body construction. And I still remember the triumph when I, on that very bike, and together with two friends, crossed for the first time the small bridges over the beautiful lagoon of Venice, having biked down all the way from Switzerland.

Since then almost thirty years have passed, and I changed my bike several times. But still I am in the saddle every year at least two weeks, discovering new corners of Europe, mostly in the Mediterranean area.

For me, these are always important journeys of discovery. Not with a fixed programme, not in a hurry, not counting kilometres. But discovering new landscapes, meeting new people, experiencing the flow of life. And what is even more important: Whether I travelled in two, or with a group, or alone, these trips were always also journeys of discovering myself. Moving the bicycle pedals in rhythmic movement, you also start to think about yourself, about your life, about your relationships, and about God.

We all need such times, when we free ourselves from the pressures of life and journey to our inner roots and to the foundation that supports us. Such journeys

open our minds, open our souls, and help us to discover new sides in ourselves, in the people around us, and in our relationship with God. We are no longer the same when we come back.

## **2 Flashes of Eternity**

It was also on these bicycle trips that I discovered Photography in a new way. Quite different from the ordinary snapshots I take during professional travel or family gatherings. Friends tell me that some of my black and white street photography has a certain human quality. Yes, I'm impressed by the French Humanist Photography and by the Italian and Spanish Neo-Realists. But there is something deeper to it, something quite simple.

When you go on a true journey of discovery, you open your eyes and your soul.

Doing this, you suddenly see in ordinary, small things a second dimension. It is as if they would become transparent, and you perceive something deeper.

You suddenly see how the painter is personally touched as he translates the beauty of the landscape into colors of his picture.

You see the love of the grand-mother clapping hands with her grand-children at the door-steps.

You see the smiling pride of the woman in the market as she sells the products of her family's labor.

You see the passionate involvement for life in the angry body of the demonstrating protester in the street.

You see the dedication of the teenage girl as she paints over the damage at father's car, which her brother has made in last night's Saturday Night fever.

You see the feelings of the young lover playing softly the guitar in the back-room of the Bar.

And you feel God's spirit blowing through the Easter Mass in the Cathedral of St. Francis in Assisi.

Then you sit down in a silent village church in Spain, look at the cross in front and read: "*Dios es Amor*" - "*God is Love*". And you feel and know: God loves you.

In these moments you understand that there is a deeper dimension to life. Which is not always visible. Or at least we are not always in the mood to see it. For me, these are moments of the true human, of life as God meant it to be. "Flashes of eternity", "calls of infinity" I call them. As a Christian I say: Signs of the Reign of God in the midst of this, our everyday life.

They tell us: There is far more to life than what you often see. There is far more depth in life than you often are aware of.

I call this the spiritual dimension. Because it has to do with the essence of life and with God. It is the call of the eternal to transcend, to go beyond the only visible

and expose ourselves to a deeper dimension, the divine, the spiritual. It is the call to inter-act with God, the call to live in love, hope and faith.

As human beings, we can not "have" it or "possess" it once for ever. We can only keep our hearts and souls as open for it as possible. Everywhere. For God's spirit does not talk with us in church and prayer only, but also in and through the simple everyday realities, the positive and the negative ones.

When talking about photography, I'm well aware that one cannot catch and conserve this dimension in a picture.

But for one, the camera helps to open the eyes. And secondly, sometimes reflections of such moments become visible in the faces of people and situations.

The famous Grand-Seigneur of French photography, Henri Cartier-Bresson, himself strongly influenced by Zen-Buddhism, wrote in 1992, at the age of 84 years:

*"La photographie est, pour moi, l'impulsion spontanée d'une attention visuelle perpétuelle, qui saisit l'instant et son éternité."*

*"Photography is, for me, the spontaneous impetus to constant visual attention which seizes the moment and its eternity."*

If one achieves to show only a little bit of that in a picture, then it gets a human quality which hints at this essential deeper dimension.

We can then share something of our own experience with others. My personal journey of discovery becomes a common journey of discovery. A journey on which we exchange our experiences and grow together. A journey, which finally leads to new being and new action.

### **3 Experiencing the Flow of the River**

Dear Friends It is obvious that I am talking about the theme of this General Assembly: "Youth Spirituality - A Common Journey of Discovery".

When speaking about spirituality, especially about Christian spirituality as one important aspect of our faith, we tend to think first of prayer, worship, bible study and meditation. It is quite obvious that we can experience God's spirit, and live our spirituality, in all these forms. And we are called to do so.

However, God's spirit is not limited to these forms. And we also know that more and more people, especially young people, have difficulties with these more traditional forms of spirituality. They are not meaningful enough for them. They do not reach down to their deeper life dimensions. I described this situation two years ago in my European Secretary's Report. (You find the text re-printed on page 27 in this year's Working Documents.) I then introduced the term "Spiritually Homeless".

I deeply believe that the spiritual dimension belongs to human existence and must be developed by every person in order to come to full human life. People need depth in their lives. People are open for the call of the true and eternal. And we as YMCA even owe it to our members to deal with this life dimension. It is an integral part of our Mission. But to adequately deal with it seems difficult today.

A lot of people, many of us included, feel somehow spiritually helpless, full of doubts and questions, spiritually homeless, or are not even aware of this dimension of life at all.

Also as YMCAs, we have difficulties to work with the spiritual dimension in our programmes. We sometimes use all kind of excuses why we don't do it, or why we don't do it more intensively, or why we don't do it with the special kind of people we are working with. It simply seems difficult and the traditional forms seem often no longer adequate. - At least if we want to be true and honest.

Because, there are also those among us, who have a theologically correct language and belief, honestly thinking they "have" it and only need to communicate "it" to others. But when meeting them, we - and especially young people - sometimes have the feeling they are not living fully.

Their life seems somehow blocked, their spirituality not flowing. It is as if they were locked in a limited, closed religious world.

Spiritually limited, spiritually helpless, spiritually homeless - it seems to me that also we as YMCA leaders know something of all this from our own experience. And it is good we do. Because we then become aware that spirituality is much more than only a correct theology, prayer, worship, bible study and meditation.

Spirituality wants to be in the whole of our lives.

What is needed is a new discovery, or a deepened and widened discovery of the spiritual dimension in life. First in our own lives. I am deeply convinced that only when we are in true and open ended contact with our own spirituality can we be true and open partners for our young people in a common journey of spiritual discovery.

That's the approach of this General Assembly. Don't expect to get ready-made answers or recipes on "how to make spiritual programmes". You have to make them yourself, together with *your* young people at home.

It is the experience of centuries that when we openly and honestly go into such a process, we suddenly get access to a source of fresh water. New life, new energy, new perspectives are opening up.

But it is like swimming in a river. We can observe how others are doing it and learn from them. But if we want to experience the flow of the river, its streaming, and the freshness of its water, we must go into it ourselves. We must leave the safe ground, forget our fears and hesitations and trust that the water will carry us.

There will be calmer passages, there will be rough times, and sometimes we may have the feeling we are not moving at all. Many questions and doubts will remain. But there is this flow of life, and the water carries us. We'll experience a wonderful new freshness and energy in our life. That's the spiritual adventure of living with our living God, being led by his refreshing spirit.

#### **4 God's Spirit in our midst**

Experiencing the flow of the river outside the more traditional - although still valid - forms of spirituality.

Can we say something more about where this can happen, and how it can happen?

Some answers to this question will be the content of our Ateliers at this Assembly, taking place on Friday and Saturday. Tonight we are going to talk about it with young people from Malta.

I already tried to give you an example that is valid for me; when I talked about my bicycle trips and my photography. I could title it with "Experiencing God's Spirit in everyday life".

A Ten Singer may experience the spiritual dimension of her or his life while preparing a new show or performing its music on stage.

Most experience God's spirit when hearing and discussing about Jesus. He is certainly the person in whom we most clearly see God and God's spirit.

A socially committed person experiences God's prophetic spirit especially in social action, in the engagement for justice and peace. Thus, spirituality also means political action. The Old Testament is full of it.

Christian spirituality is never only contemplation. It means spiritual empowerment and leads to expression.

Is God's spirit then inside or outside ourselves? - Is God himself inside or outside ourselves?

Many theologians, philosophers and psychologists fought their battles about this question.

I believe it is simply both. The inside and the outside are anyway not that separate from each other as we often tend to think. God's spirit is inside and outside ourselves, and it flows around us and through us.

But in any case, God's spirit comes from beyond our selves. God is a personal God, a counter-part, a "you", with whom we can interact. He is more than we are. And we are invited to get into him:

*"Inquietum est cor nostrum usque ad requiescat in te" - "Restless is our heart until it rests in you",*

said the church father Augustinus.

God is also in the everyday realities of this world. God became flesh in Jesus Christ so that people could see and touch him.

If we want to discover the spiritual dimension of life, we do not have to look up to the skies or look into the depth of our souls only. We can simply look around us, at the life around us, at life in its various cultural, political and economical contexts. And get involved.

Nobody can do it for us. And we cannot do it for our young people. We all have to get into the flow of the river, into the flow of life, ourselves.

## **5 The Glittering Silver Light on the Waters of Life**

Our experiences will be different from each other. Let me use a picture to explain this.

When I stand at a lake in the moonlight, I see a glittering silver stripe on the water. The reflection of the moon on the lake. Marvelous. "A call of infinity", I would call it - and maybe take a picture.

A friend of mine stands some hundred meters besides me. She also sees such a glittering silver stripe on the water. Even more: She sees a small fisherman's boat in the middle of her stripe. Because due to her different position, she sees her silver light at another place than I see mine. I cannot see what she sees, and she cannot see what I see.

Where then is the silver stripe "objectively"? - And where is it if none of us is looking at it? - Does it "exist" at all?

The picture encourages me to open my eyes and look for my silver light, for God's spirit on the waters of life.

## **6 The Question**

Concluding, my question to you as YMCA leaders is not how many bible studies and prayer meetings you have in your programme, or how well you teach "Christianity". My question is much more comprehensive:

***Do you, and how do you, live the spiritual dimension together with your young people?***

To work with Youth Spirituality means to be on my own journey of spiritual discovery. And to live an open journey together with young people.

We all have to be in the river ourselves to feel its flow and to be carried by its waters.

We need open eyes and an open heart to see and to be touched by the glittering silver light of eternity on the waters of life. And then to respond to it.

We can and we shall discover God's spirit in so many different places in the flow of life.

Such spirituality means an enormous liberation, freedom and depth for our life.

## **7 Planted by The Water**

Dear Friends I want to finish this first part of my Report by quoting the Bible passage with which I close all my church services: It's Jeremiah 17, 7-8 and a very important text for me:

*"Blessed is the person who trust in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by the water, sending out its roots towards the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." Amen.*

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## **PART II: THE COMMON JOURNEY OF THE EAY**

### **1 The EAY is very successful - because we walk together, side by side**

Dear Friends

In this second part of my report, I first want to do a quick look back on the past year, but then concentrate on the future and on the background of the decisions we have to take later this afternoon.

In all necessary modesty, and knowing very well about our weaknesses, we can again be very proud of what we did and of what we achieved in the past 12 months. We do not loudly trumpet out our successes, and we do not produce glossy brochures and reports. But we again helped to facilitate substantial and sustainable developments, both of YMCA Movements and of several thousand individuals, mostly young people.

What is our secret for this success? Our secret is that we all walk together, side by side, that we are on a common journey.

The EAY is not only a service organization; something in the direction of "We pay our EAY fees and you deliver your services". No, already our Constitution defines us as a "Christian Community" (§5). We walk together, side by side. In mutual respect and dynamic inter-action. As brothers and sisters in Christ.

That's why today over 20 EAY Committees and Groups are at work. And although our EAY professionals fulfil important key roles, the biggest part of our work is still done by volunteers and professionals of our National Movements. This, of course, also includes our partners from overseas.

For this self-understanding, and for all this excellent work *you* are putting into our common journey, I would like to thank all of you once more and most seriously. It is one of the reasons why I am motivated and proud to work for this organization EAY.

### **2 Developments in the EAY Priority Working Fields**

Let us now have a short overview of the EAY Priority Working Fields and of some key developments in them. You find details in the reports in your Working Documents.

In **Movement Development**, the transition from Field Groups to Partner Groups for the East-Central European YMCAs is successfully completed. Several of these movements are today well established and run operations which can easily compete with smaller Western or Southern European YMCAs. Of course, life is still not easy for them, and they need our continuing cooperation in several aspects - as all our movements do!

Our Movement Development Group now concentrates on the further developments in Eastern Europe: Armenia, Georgia, Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.

We still need more partners for this geographical area. If you see a possibility to get involved, please get involved!

**Leadership Development** continues to be the key in all our Development work, our "Training the Trainers" scheme being the centre of it all.

Last year we had around 600 leaders in trainings with EAY staff involvement. The trainings took place in 11 different countries with trainees from 20 National Movements. They also included two "Training the Trainers" participants from Africa and a key trainer from Latinamerica. We believe that Inter-Area Cooperation is specially fruitful in the field of Leadership Development and must be further expanded.

Two substantial Training Manuals have been produced: A "Training the Trainers" Manual and a Manual on "In-Service Training".

We also reached our other goal and now have the desired Pool of Trainers, trainers with a common approach to Leadership and Movement Development. Today, there are some 80 EAY-trained Leadership Trainers, multiplicators who are ready and able to serve not only within their own countries, but also in regional and Europe-wide training events.

**Communication and Networking** continues to be intensive, both among National Movements and individuals. Especially our staff is working hard in this field.

At present only very few of our National Movements are still isolated and not involved in such vital partnerships and in cooperation with other Movements.

The "Volunteers for Europe" exchange scheme experiences a kind of "second spring" and is dealing with some 70 volunteers and hosting YMCAs per year.

The "YMCA Europe" Web presence exceeds all our expectations. The statistics show almost 3'000 visitors on our Web every month. This also causes quite lively E-Mail traffic with our office.

**Social Exclusion** and **Youth Spirituality** are the two main topics in the new EAY issue orientation. Both have been made the theme of a General Assembly and of EAY seminars.

It is encouraging to see that several National Movements did follow-ups in their National publications and activities. I would like to encourage all of you to do the same in your surroundings.

It is now very important that both topics are further developed, become integral parts of our overall EAY process, and are included as elements in all programmes and activities.

In the field of **European Programmes**, we are still a bit struggling with the necessary better integration into the overall EAY process and especially into Movement Development processes. But the awareness has risen, and progress is becoming visible.

Regarding European events, the EAY continues to be the European youth organisation with probably the highest number of European youth events. Last

year we counted around 2'100 participants, whereby the European Ten Sing Festival was the high-flyer. This means that together with our training events and working platforms, around 3'000 people gathered in meetings related to the EAY.

In **Global Cooperation** especially World Alliance issues needed also the careful attention of our Executive Committee. In the foreground were the Harvey Thomson consultancy process and problems around IMSS. I'll come back to this in a moment.

**European Dialogue:** Our new, young leader in this field brought a fresh wind and a more active role to European Dialogue and YMCA Representation. We now urgently need from our National Movements further qualified young people to intensify our presence and relevance in European bodies.

In the field of **Finances**, finally, we can be satisfied again with the past year. A tight finance management and careful budgeting with 5-year projections continue to enable a careful finance policy and stable operations.

However, the critical point remains our dependency from outside funding. In my opinion, it is of utmost importance that the EAY now gets on its own feet at least in the area of what is a reasonable and adequate EAY *core* operation in the realities of *today*. This is part of the "EAY 2000" issue, which will be in the centre of this afternoon business sessions.

Dear Friends So far a quick overview of where we are today and what we achieved in the past year. Again: I think we all can be very proud of it. We achieved it all together, because we walk together, side by side.

### **3 The Proposal "EAY 2000"**

In the last part of my report, I now want to look towards the future.

In the centre of this afternoon business sessions stands the agenda item "EAY 2000". "EAY 2000" contains the proposal of our Executive Committee to move the EAY main office from St. Gallen to Prague, applying a transition period which would begin this autumn.

The EAY has a culture of transparency and openness. I, therefore, want to put this proposal into a wider context, and also tell you something about the developments which led to it. This especially for all those of you who are not that familiar with EAY matters, or who are here for the first time. First of all, it is important to remember how the EAY Staff is presently structured and financed:

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## **EAY INITIATIVES AND STAFFING**

### **Development Secretaries 1995 - 1999**

Michal Sourek / Borova, Czech Republic  
Mikhail Guskov / Moscow, Russia  
Zdenka Sera / Ceske Budejovice, Czech Republic

Michal Szymanczak (70 %) / Warsaw,  
Poland

### **Development Initiative**

Johan Vilhelm Eltvik / Oslo,  
Norway  
Regula Sandgaard-Leumann (50  
%) / St. Gallen, Switzerland  
Dany Kempter (50 %) / St.  
Gallen, Switzerland

### **European Secretariat (Basic Functions)**

Dölf Weder / St.  
Gallen,  
Switzerland  
Ryan Metcalfe /  
St. Gallen,  
Switzerland

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The most important element for our discussion here is the Movement Development Initiative, the second "stone" of our pyramid. Today, the biggest part of the money for it comes from the World Alliance, under its Intermovement Support System IMSS.

Some years ago, the World Alliance sold its former Headquarters in Geneva. Most of the money, today some 20 million Swiss Francs, was put into the bank. And part of the income from this John R. Mott Fund is now used to support IMSS projects around the world.

We are very grateful that also the EAY could benefit from that money for its Movement Development Initiative and would like to thank the World Alliance once more most sincerely for this support.

However, at our last General Assembly 1997, we were unexpectedly confronted with the intention of the World Alliance to no longer provide IMSS funding for our Development Initiative. Plus to reduce the percentage of IMSS funds going to Europe in general.

Our General Assembly reacted strongly. All our National Movements, co-signed by all cooperating Movements present, sent a unanimous Resolution to the World Alliance requesting the continuation of IMSS funding for our Development Initiative. In our common opinion, the presence of and *Begleitung* by EAY staff in our Developing Movements has highest priority. (You find the Resolution on page 49 in your Working Documents).

At the meeting of the World Alliance Executive Committee of last June, after long negotiations finally a compromise was reached: The overall IMSS contribution to

Europe will be reduced from 23% to 15%, which means by 1/3. But for the grant years 1998 and 1999, the same SFr. amount was guaranteed as for last year.

When the EAY Executive Committee then met here in Malta in November of last year, they had to deal with the fact that from March 2000 the present Development Initiative can no longer continue, and that a loss of roughly SFr. 200'000 per year must be somehow compensated.

One way would of course be that our National Movements pay higher contributions to the EAY. But this does not seem very realistic, at least not at this moment in time. The Executive Committee, therefore, concentrated on other solutions.

As the European Secretary (myself), is the biggest cost factor in salary terms, and as the perspective for the end of my employment was around the year 2000 from the very beginning, the Executive Committee decided to terminate my working contract by autumn of next year already.

It was also understood since the beginning of my employment that such staff change would possibly be connected with an office move away from St. Gallen.

The Executive Committee discussed several scenarios and established a Working Group to research possible alternative locations for the EAY main office. (You could read all this in the minutes of the November meeting.)

However, shortly before this year's March meeting of our Executive Committee, the World Alliance surprised with two new messages.

The first one being that the World Alliance Finance Committee had decided to shorten the guaranteed contribution for this year due to lower than expected returns on investments. This decision has recently been corrected. It was based on a calculation error.

Secondly, the World Alliance advised us that the IMSS funding for the Development Initiative will not extend beyond March of the coming year. Reason: IMSS Projects are funded for three year periods only.

Our Executive Committee had very long and intensive discussions on how to deal with this unexpectedly early fall-away of some SFr. 200'000 per year, starting in 10 months' time already.

It became clear that we cannot wait until the formal decision in February 1999 to see whether the World Alliance yet changes their opinion, or another door opens. The EAY simply cannot take such high financial risks. You find this option discussed in more details in your Working Documents.

But as preparations for staff change and a possible move of the EAY office were under way anyway, why not start moving a bit earlier already? And why not combine it with a transition period to make sure that the EAY operations can continue as smoothly as possible also during the office move. This would also mean that the EAY stands on its own feet, and is much less dependent on outside money, at least for its most vital *core* functions. Financially, such transition period is possible thanks to very substantial special local St. Gallen contributions.

This finally was the direction taken by the Executive Committee. The process of appointing a new Secretary General was started. The decision will be taken this autumn. (You have the job announcement on page 131 in your Working Documents).

Several office locations have been studied, taking into account the given financial capacity and the necessary core staffing.

Clear conclusion:

***The EAY Executive Committee suggests the EAY General Assembly to move the EAY office from St. Gallen to Prague.***

For the time being, the legal seat of the EAY will remain in St. Gallen.

The legal, operational and taxation implications of such a move to Prague have been carefully checked with qualified outside experts. While some details are still under further exploration, it can be said that we do not expect any major legal, operational or taxation problems with an office move, or with a move of the EAY seat to Prague.

As the Czech Republic is in membership negotiations with the European Union at present, we can even expect to have our seat in an EU country in a few years.

A very important advantage is of course also that we already have trained EAY staff in Prague.

Zdenka Será and Michal Sourek would assume responsibility for the EAY office operations. We can be proud of this fact. Because Zdenka and Michal come out of our Movement Development and Leadership Development efforts over the past 8 years.

On the other hand, and that is the sad side, part of the present St. Gallen staff would leave the EAY by the end of this year, Regula and myself at the end of the transition period in the autumn of next year.

#### **4 The exciting Perspective of a small EAY Study and Training Centre**

And now, I would like to offer you a special "bonbon".

The older ones among you may still know that the European YMCAs long ago had an International Study and Training Institute on the island of Mainau in Lake Constance, Southern Germany.

It was a great, uniting institution for the whole European YMCA. And I myself participated in conferences on the Mainau since I was a young YMCA leader of 15 years only.

But then, in the late Sixties, Count Bernadotte needed the Castle for his family, and the YMCA Institute Mainau was closed.

The positive side of this closure was, that it a few years later led to the foundation of what is today the EAY.

But the dream of a small European YMCA Study and Training Centre has never died since these days. Many of us thought and talked about it. But the dream never seemed to become reality.

Last year, in Armenia, there was a meeting of the Pool of EAY Trainers. All of them participants of our Training the Trainers scheme over the past years. And they came up with the same dream: A small EAY Study and Training Centre, located somewhere in Central Europe. You find a short description of this dream and the reasons for it on page 55 of your Working Documents.

And now, we suddenly see a chance that this dream of generations may become reality.

Y's Men Denmark raised a substantial sum of money for a YMCA Training Centre in the Czech Republic. Around SFr. 100'000.

And both Y's Men Denmark and the Czech YMCA are interested in bringing this money into a joint venture with the EAY. In the form of a small EAY Study and Training Centre. Possibly in combination with the future premises of the EAY office.

There is also a strong interest expressed by the Czech government. They are considering a special offer in terms of premises.

We are not yet able to present details at this moment. Several aspects, including the long-term financial feasibility, need further study.

At least at the beginning, the EAY office will be located in the central YMCA building in Prague, which is also equipped with all necessary telecommunication facilities.

But for us here as EAY General Assembly, and discussing "EAY 2000", this possible additional element means that the proposed office move to Prague may soon bear additional fruit. The EAY may find a new home, offering great new perspectives for its future.

## **5 Today's Challenges - also Opportunities**

Dear Friends The situation in which we find ourselves today is a challenge in many respects. And as with all challenges, we can look at the negative and critical aspects of things - and they exist. We can regret what we loose - and we shall loose things and people. We can even refuse to take the necessary steps and simply wait and cry.

But all challenges are also opportunities.

After having now worked very intensively with all these questions during the past months - and, I tell you, sometimes seriously suffering under them - after all this, I simply want to tell you that I today see a good way forward for the EAY. I see that the EAY can get on its own feet with *today's* core operations. I see a feasible office move to Prague and an orderly transition period. I see exciting new perspectives and opportunities, especially if a small Training Centre should become feasible. I see that the EAY can remain enormously relevant also in the next decade. I, therefore, stand fully behind the office move to Prague.

## **6 The Changed Roles and Responsibilities require a Fresh Look at the whole International YMCA System**

There is, however, one last aspect I feel obliged to mention, too.

What we do with this restructuring and moving our office to Prague is an enormous saving exercise.

The EAY will cut its salary cost for the four key staff positions by around 60% over the next two years. Or to say it in Swiss Francs: We shall cut these core salaries from around SFr. 400'000 to SFr. 170'000.

This is only possible because we over the past years strongly supported the development of our Central and Eastern European YMCA friends, and can now without difficulty move to one of these YMCA Movements and their lower salary level.

However, in my opinion, this is not yet a long-term solution.

If the EAY shall remain a relevant, truly All-European organization, which continues to contribute something substantial to the future of the YMCAs in the whole of Europe, we, in the long-term, must come to a higher finance capacity for our core staffing.

We must remain able to also pay Western European and growing Central and Eastern European salaries.

The EAY almost doubled its membership over the past eight years. And it today covers 8 time zones. There is no way back to an Egon Slopianka and Jutta Icke operation of the eighties, when the EAY staff consisted of a European Secretary and an Administrative Assistant only - a 1+1 staffing.

To remain relevant, the EAY today needs a minimum *core* staffing of two Executives and two administrative positions, thus, a 2+2 core staffing.

On the other hand, I'm very well aware that most of our National Movements are facing very difficult financial times, too. And that they are at the limits of what they can afford to pay for international YMCA work.

Further grants and maybe some sponsorship money are available. But mainly for *projects* and not for continuing *core* funding as we need it.

The good news is that, in my opinion, enough overall finances for the world-wide *core* operations are available in the international YMCA system already at present. But they must be allocated differently and more effectively.

The *changed* roles and responsibilities of each of the international YMCA levels need to be recognized. This includes the shift of responsibility for Movement Development from the World Alliance to the Areas. In future, the overall financial resources must be allocated in full accordance with these realities, in full accordance with these *changed* roles and responsibilities. This is not the case at present.

Financial dependencies, as the EAY is presently experiencing them with IMSS funding, must be removed, too. They are in strict contradiction with our

development philosophy, which is based on empowerment, self-determination and subsidiarity.

You saw these points made in the answer of the Executive Committee to the World Alliance Harvey Thomson questionnaire.

The upcoming World Council will deal with some of these questions. The European delegates must be well prepared.

The Harvey Thomson consultancy process and the new World Alliance Administration will then further work on them. And finally decisions will be taken.

In my opinion, also the EAY needs to have a fundamental look at these issues in not too distant a future.

We last year adopted an inspiring EAY Vision and a clear Strategy for the years 1997 to 2002. But what we need to do soon, is to ask where we want to be in the year 2010. And what the necessary tools are to reach it. Once we know that then we can move into that direction. Step by step. With a clear goal. - As we always did over the past years.

I can well imagine to use our next year's General Assembly to have a deep analysis of these questions and to come to first conclusions.

## **7 Closure**

Friends, I come to the end of my speech.

My report in 1992 had the sub-title: "*Visions - Courage - Faith and Love*"

I believe that's exactly what we need also today:

- A clear *Vision* of where we want to go.
- *Courage* to take the necessary decisions, which include change.
- But above all, *Faith* in our heavenly father and *Love* for the people in Europe and in the World.

We are together on a Common Journey. It is also a Spiritual Journey. Let us continue to walk together, side by side - in the Light of God.

Thank you.