

IOWC overcame a bombing, kidnappings, and negative press coverage in Paris

Henri Blanchard
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After going through the trials of a bombing, kidnappings, and negative press coverage, the IOWC waged a victorious campaign in Paris, bringing over 1,000 people to the February 26 Day of Hope Festival in Paris' "Salle Gaveau." Upon hearing of the success, Rev. Moon asked the IOWC which had planned to leave the next day for another country, to extend its tour in France through March.

Henri Blanchard, president of the French movement IAUCM), spoke on "The Hope of God for the World Today." The program also included musical selections from choral groups and instrumentalists as well as a slide show. One more festival has been held recently in L; on, and one more will be held in the future.

The controversy began when the 300-member IOWC team arrived in France. Their impact was readily felt in the small country, about the size of Texas. Controversy intensified after the January 21 bombing and the filmed abduction of Marie Christine Amadeo. (Marie Christine has been abducted three times and returned by the police each time.)

In the midst of this, director Henri Blanchard has been in the public eye, making many media appearances. Dozens of curious people -- sensing the contradiction between the members they meet on the street and the news reports, are coming to the French centers daily.

Recently the IOWC has published a newsletter, giving insight into some of the recent events. Excerpts follow:

Lewis Rayapen, present in the Villa Aublet center at the time of the bombing, describes the event:

"By one o'clock in the morning most people were sound asleep. It was around ten to two when we smelled something burning. I thought it was a gas leak and went to investigate in the kitchen, leaving Miss Kommedall at the telephone table.

"I had time to check everything downstairs in the basement, and I walked back to the ground floor. The smell was still persistent when I reached the landing that led to the office. I meant to turn left and go back into the reception room. For some reason I decided to investigate another room on my right. I stood inside for two or three seconds. Then came a tremendous explosion that resounded in the whole building. The lights went out. After a few seconds came the shouts of Miss Kommedall. Had she stayed where I left her, she would not have stood a chance. As it was,

she had been led to investigate the office, situated just in front of the reception room. (Ed. *Apparently the reception room received the brunt of the blast.*) She received severe injuries in the limbs, but it is clear that we both had been guided away from the main blast.

"Spiritual guidance requires an internal condition of availability for God. In this particular case, it came in the form of a thought. We both had investigated the reception room, so there was no need to stay there, or, in my case, to go back there. It was purely our desire to protect our brothers and sisters that led us to safety. In fact the last words Miss Kommedall spoke to me before the explosion were: 'Tell me how I can serve you better.' I believe that it is this attitude of total devotion, of placing one's life in God's hands which will enable us to survive and win the decisive battle against Satan. Once we fulfill our share, the responsibility passes on to the spirit world to warn us of dangers."

Newsletter editor Mark Palmer reports on Anne Britt Kommedall, hospitalized after the bombing.

"After paying such a big sacrifice and experiencing so much pain and difficulties, our dear sister Anna Britt Kommedall is having many wonderful experiences in the hospital. Many people are hearing about our Family through Miss Kommedall. She had not been in hospital long before she was witnessing and contacting many people.

"One night, however, she was feeling much pain and she was crying; her tears were not just due to her suffering but they were much deeper and much more sad than normal. One boy aged 22 or 23 had heard a girl crying in the night. He asked the doctor the next morning who she was, and why she was crying. The doctor told the boy that she was a 'Moonist;' the boy took immediate interest since just that morning he had read about the bomb in Villa Aublet. Eager to find out the truth, he went and visited her. They began to speak deeply about the Principle. He is a wonderful person, a student in law and now hopes to join the family when he himself gets out of the hospital.

"She has also been distributing pamphlets about our lectures and she created such an interest that Michel Beauvais came and gave a lecture in the hospital to some very positive nurses who are now even more positive!"

To become economically self-sufficient, the team also went fundraising. Following are two testimonies.

Elisabeth Heyen tells:

"While fundraising we have so many experiences because we can have give and take with people of all different ages. I met one man who was about 60 years old and I asked him if he'd like to buy a card. I spoke to him about building deeper relationships between people through loving God. He was just taking out his money when he asked me whether I was English.

"'No,' I said, 'I am German.'

"'German? Do you know what this is?' he asked and pointed at a red button on his jacket. He explained to me how he had been in a concentration camp during World War II and how he suffered terrible things. I did not understand him so well but I could feel the suffering and hatred still in his heart. I cannot put into words how moved I was when he said, 'Do you understand? I will give you the money although you are a German.

"I felt immediately from Heavenly Father the depth of our mission in Europe, of how we are paving the way for unity between all nations.... "

From Lyon, Jack Corley reports:

"For many days I had prayed that I could experience Father's heart. Then one day I was fundraising with newspapers in a block of apartments. In one block a woman bought one and she wished me well. I continued to the next block. As I was speaking to one man at his door I heard footsteps coming up the stairs and shouts of 'Moon sect! Moon sect!' It was the same woman and she was very angry; she spoke in French so I could not understand anything except one word 'La police! La police!'

"As I went with her to her apartment to await the police, I thought how Rev. Moon would be in this position. When he was about to go to prison he always thought of how he could use the situation for God. In my mind I was wondering how I could change her and make her positive.

"In the apartment she began criticizing Rev. Moon, saying how he was 'Pas bien' (no good). On the other hand I said that he was 'Tres bien' (very good). Eventually she became more calm and

we began to talk via a dictionary. I wanted to speak directly about Rev. Moon's life and suffering. As I spoke she began to cry and she apologized for having spoken badly about him and our movement. After a while she telephoned the police and told them not to come, rebought the newspaper, gave me her address, and asked if she could come and hear a lecture.

"From this experience I learned that if we really love people and feel compassionate towards them, then we can really change them. If they are negative, it may be because they have many difficulties in their life. If we show them we really care then they will open their hearts and we can fill them with Father's love."

Jean-Pierre Fassbind writes:

"In Lyon a Dominican Father held a lecture about the 'Moon sect,' so Marie-Carmen Martine and I decided to go. The church was full, about 300-400 people. They spoke about Rev. Moon's life, the AUCM (French Family), and the Divine Principle, meaning to show the 'single-mindedness' and the deep contradiction with Catholic theology. Then there were testimonies -- some positive and some negative. Among them was a testimony from a young man who had been at 'Manoir Fleuri' saying how he had never been brainwashed, never seen drugs and that he found the community warm and friendly.

"After a short conclusion the priest asked if anyone had anything to add. I felt I had to say something. So I went in front and I wanted to speak from my heart. I gave my testimony. I spoke about my united family, my studies, my spiritual search, my concern for the problems of the world, how I met the Family, my study of Divine Principle, my one year of military service outside the Family and so on. Someone replied that I had no theological education. I told them how the love from family members and the teaching of Sun Myung Moon had convinced me and how St. Peter had not studied theology but accepted Jesus because of his message of love. The people were moved and receptive but the priest concluded the discussion.

"As everyone was leaving, many young people asked questions and for our address. Many felt that we had been interrupted and wanted to continue the discussion. And so we met in a classroom, with 30 young people. They were all from different backgrounds, atheists, Jehovahs, Marxists but no Catholics. They asked many questions about Jesus and some of the usual journalist-type questions. I spoke about Heavenly Father, about His suffering, about the suffering of His son Jesus and the goals of our family.

"During this meeting I realized that half of them did not want to hear any theology or ideology but rather wanted harmony and love. They saw that this existed among us and that it was missing in society. At 1:00 a. m. the meeting ended and we distributed 'The Truth about Rev. Sun Myung Moon.' They went away with three main questions: 'Who can tell us the truth? How can we meet God with our heart? If trust and sacrifice are missing in our society and in our churches, does it really exist in the Unification Church?'"