

CHAPTER 8: THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA

It was the end of the 'seventies'. It felt like God was opening a new door. Slowly we had moved into calmer waters after the turbulent time of almost a bankruptcy a few years ago. Dust had settled, peace at the office, peace in the family. But was this our whole life? Was this the purpose? We could not think so, but what would be the next step? Slowly God started to point His finger to a little spot in Leen's life, where change was needed. This spot was a terrible feeling of anger about another organization that had started to do the record-distribution after the Anglo-American company had broken their contract with us. Our ex-promo-man had started this company so that he could sign the new record-deal as result of the take-over. Well how would you feel to have to compete suddenly with an unwanted other "christian" record-company? We had invested in our own recordings so that we could realise new income. But after a few years this man had left this new company and there was a new director. But our feelings of anger towards this company and this new director, who was innocent of the bad acts of his predecessor, kept going. Finally the soft Voice started to speak again..... *'Leen, if your are really just and holy, why then not going to see this director of that company.....'* Well, ah, how would you feel to visit your enemy? But the voice kept repeating this message over the next days. So finally Leen took the telephone to make an appointment. This company had 2 directors and Leen was with one of them and tried to bridge the differences, but it did NOT work. Oh yes, the man was nice, but with no sign of understanding, the doors remained shut. Leen felt hopeless, had he really heard the voice of God? He felt silly being in the Lion's den. On the way out, this director introduced him to the other director and till Leens great surprise something clicked within a second. With this person a new appointment was made and during that evening all pain and bitterness was ironed out. Doors of understanding opened. And Leen and Ria really saw that these persons now in leadership were not guilty of betrayal. Leen and Ria saw that God had called those new directors into their own ministry using records. Even God convinced Leen and Ria in 1980 that He would call Leen and Ria into new areas and that it was better to step out of the commercial field. Here their mission was fulfilled as He had called new men. So to their own and many others surprise in 1980 Leen and Ria gave to these men their own record-company, with exception of the rights and productions of the Continental LP's. That was news for the press.

This unexpected move was the beginning of another step. This other company had made the beginning of a 'Gospel Music Magazine'. Leen and Ria had already since 1974 'Sjofar', their own magazine. It was decided to merge those 2 magazines and change Sjofar into an in-house fundraising newsletter. And so it happened. A strong new magazine was launched to benefit both former enemies.....The editorial staff came to Rotterdam where there was space, as the Continental Sound record-company had moved to the other record-company. Life can be strange. And now today there is a good relationship with this record-company.....After 2 years the magazine became 100% owned by Leens and Ria's ministry.

But this story of humbleness and listening and learning also had another result. As the record-company was gone, time and space was available for something new. Part of that came through the new magazine. But it was time for something great.

For some time Leen had had contact with his colleague Cam Floria in the USA about Christian Artists Seminars. After setting up The Continentals Cam had started these Seminars in 1974. These seminars brought together all the leading Christian artists, who gave a lot of workshops, so that the new generation could quickly attain excellence. But when would be the time to start

this event in Europe? As time and space became available and as peace had been signed with the record-companies, it seemed to be the right time. Now it turned out to be of great importance that the American record-companies wanted to send their artists on their expenses as this organization in the Netherlands was a ministry and not a competitive record-company. In 1980 negotiations were started with leadership all across Europe and finally a key-meeting took place at the De Bron Centre in Dalfsen, the Netherlands. Many of the representatives were the national Continental coordinators Leen had recruited and trained and who were ready to give a lot of help. As result, in 1981 the first European Christian Artist Seminar was held. The best European artists performed and gave workshops. Today we can be thankful for so much help from so many sides and for the help of American record-companies. This first meeting was necessary to start building bridges of understanding, which were absolutely needed in Europe. This Seminar turned during the years into the most important generator for renewal and change..... By giving away a record-company we received back so much more...