

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

PRIVATE

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Dear friends,

The next two letters are going to be the product of teamwork with Finn Harald Wetterfors. On Sunday, I head to the mountains for a week's camp with a clutch of boys and young men. So before I go, I'm putting my notes on paper (well, on screen), and Finn Harald will finish the letter off after my departure. It seems rather mad to sneak out the back door at the busiest, most interesting period of the summer, but there it is. We can't do everything. I rather suspect that I may find that my room has been turned into a dormitory while I've been away, and that I have to sleep in the car or a garage until the numbers drop again at the end of the month. I've been preparing a little series of meditations for the camp, on the part of mountains in Jesus's life and in the Old Testament: well worth doing, I can recommend it. I can only pray that we will all find our strength renewed, and soar on the wings of eagles!

This week has brought us to the close of the 'Europe in the making' session, and the focus on the role of minorities. As you will have gathered, with a conference on much the same theme at the other end of the lake, in Geneva, this has seemed very timely. The media have carried our press stories that you find enclosed. 'We have been taught very different versions of history,' said a Hungarian, speaking side by side with a young Romanian, about the problems of Transsylvania (a region of Romania where there is a strong Hungarian community). 'The facts may be the same,' she went on, 'but our views of them are not. We could have been good enemies if we had not met here in Caux!'

A highlight of the week has been another evening with the Bulgarian mime group, before they sadly left us to return home. What a tonic they have been, with few or no words at all, on stage and around the house. 'We come from different worlds,' said their director, introducing this moment of magic and hilarious laughter, along with deep-felt quiet. 'But we want to bring these two worlds together, here in this place chosen by God. Here we have found a small model of the new world. We come from a small town in a small country. Bulgaria looks like the palm of a hand on the map, and we want to be a hand stretched out to you. I haven't experienced such care as we've met here. I hope we take back some of the sacred light that we have found here, and that we can share it with our people when we get back.' He particularly thanked the Caux technical crew for their care and support. I'm afraid that their show really does defy description. Suffice it to say, "sheer genius".

In our community, about half were from the former communist countries of East and Central Europe: Czechs, East Germans, Poles, Russians (from Estonia), and some of the Bulgarians. 'You have been a family for me, where I have found only openness and respect,' said a teacher. She told how every year they had been forced to celebrate a day of 'Lenin lessons', but now there was

nothing. She wanted to give lessons to her students based on what she had learnt in Caux, she said. A young Pole added, 'It's easy to be here; it's clear that it's harder to take some of the spirit from here back into our own environment. But I have decided to apologise to all those I've hurt, and to say "Thank you" to all those who have helped me. You have to start to change yourself to be part of this world family.'

Another Pole spoke of the powerful feelings of hate 'for those who created the system under which we suffered for so long', and of her own conviction to draw a line on the past. In a lively discussion on 'Truth matters', she said, 'If we told the truth, it could land us and our friends in prison.' She went on to tell how under interrogation she had freely expressed her convictions and beliefs, but she had not betrayed her friends.

Towards the end of the week the halls of Mountain House echoed with voices concerned with questions of health and of family. Two forums on these themes will run parallel to the middle of next week, and some of their sessions were combined right from the beginning. Wisely so, as these issues are so closely related in society.

'Who cares for the carers?' was one of the questions which is relevant for both health personnel and for caregivers in the families. 'What effect do our life styles have on health in our communities?' asked the doctors and the nurses. Dr Adu-Sarkodie from Ghana has specialised on AIDS. 'Sure we should be concerned' he said when he talked about children and others who 'are suffering through no fault of theirs. We have a lot to share as health workers and family to help people find the true meaning of life and what our Creator has purposed for our lives.'

A general practitioner from Norway, Dr Viveka Johnson, talked about the time, the courage, the talent of listening and the patience she needed 'in order to unlock the innermost doors in the patient's heart' where the real cause of the physical symptoms can lie hidden.

After the first day of deliberations there was not a single seat - and little floor space - free on Saturday evening in the Great Hall. An American nurse, who takes part in the forum, had heard that 35 black gospel singers from her home town Atlanta would perform at the annual Jazz Festival down in Montreux. She invited them to sing at Mountain House. They came with great anticipation. With them came the Mayor of Atlanta, Mr Maynard Jackson, whose words you can read in the accompanying news report.

Sylvie Söderlund, who grew up at Caux, greeted them with a song from the Swiss mountains. And then for more than an hour the Atlanta Super Choir sent waves of 'total' music over the 600 delegates who gave them an enthusiastic response that must have reminded the gospel singers of their own congregations at home. It was clear afterwards that they had appreciated meeting the people from 48 nations here as much as we appreciated the sheer joy and conviction of their singing.

Let us end the week on that note. Greetings from,

Finn Harald Wetterfors

Andrew Stallybrass