

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANOPAMA
CH - 1824 CAUX

Monday 17th July 1995

Dear friends,

One week only, since I last wrote... And already the first session is ending, some are leaving, and more are coming, the house is filling up to close on 500 for the next 'Society of tomorrow' session. The average age of this last session has been lowered by enthusiastic younger friends from Poland, Switzerland, Britain, the US, who have been a full part of the 'carrying team'. One fresh arrival asked in the front hall, 'Is there a college group or school class on a visit here?' Those organizing this new session are mostly young people, at the start of their working lives, but I picked up my parents yesterday, both over 80. They are friends with some of the organizers, and want to offer a 'grandparently presence'.

Last Monday, just after my first letter, we held a press conference here, the first for some time, to launch the 'Caux anniversary lectures', and the summer's conferences. The local paper down the hill, and the largest circulation paper in the French-speaking part of Switzerland came; a good test run for our outreach to the media for next year. Then at 5 o'clock, we had the first Monday lecture: a French-speaking Swiss, one of the founding fathers of the Jura Canton, on Switzerland's experience of minorities, a case study. He spoke with great passion, and expressed concern for Switzerland's future. Three articles have listed all the further lectures, and made the point that they are open to the public, so we hope that increasingly people from the region, and even further afield will come for these occasions. All the village of Caux has received the invitation for the series, and of course, the next one is this afternoon...

During this last week, Russian has been spoken a good deal from the platform, and Russian seemed to be the lingua franca on the translators' corridor, behind the booths on the 5th floor: the sound technician, the young German and English women who've come to help and of course the Russian cabin translators all natter away, and I felt quite behind the game! A Russian I met over a meal was amazed by the number of Russian-speakers from other countries that he had met here.

Since we haven't written any further press stories (after the opening, and the lecture), I'll quote at some length from one of the Russians who spoke - Grigori Pomerants, a philosopher and historian of cultures. Western relativists, he said characterized moral effort as 'coercion which threatens to impinge in some way on someone else, and which presupposes the presence of some kind of pivot or axis point, which in actual fact cannot exist. Such relativism may seem like an achievement to the relativists themselves, but in the eyes of the people of the Third World it seems to be what it indeed is - the profoundest disorientation lightly veiled beneath a snobbish love or desire for nothingness. Such tolerance in its very essence is nothing other than lack of character; it

is incompatible with the basic European values. It is incompatible with Christianity...

'Each religious revelation is simply an interpretation from God's language into man's. The original, God's text, is beyond human differentiation. God is one, but he is spirit, and to acknowledge his unity is to accept each great revelation as simply a visible reflection of the invisible world. I don't expect a new religion, but a new understanding of the old faiths, an understanding of their internal similarity, and an understanding of the truth that dialogue is the most up-to-date approach to the mystery of eternity, around which the human spirit circles, giving rise to culture.' He spoke of the place 'where the voice of silence is more powerful than words'. Pomerants continued, 'A new united global civilization is being created. The process is painful. The death throes of the old civilization are visible to all. The creation of the new is slow to come.'

'Some kind of link between hierarchy and freedom is an aspect of all stable cultures, and if we don't find a balance between hierarchy and freedom, the unrest will last for centuries. Contemporary European freedom has reached its apogee - and overstepped its bounds. If we do not limit our freedom of action, we will not be able to preserve it. Genuine freedom is freedom which comes from hierarchy, from above, freedom of the infinite, not determined within ourselves. It is God's will become our own internal will. Such freedom is rooted at the greatest depth, where there is no longer any choice, and we are not "free", but God is free to unfold his will within us. Postmodernism is moving along the path of the broadening of external freedoms. The pathos of the dawning age is self-limitation in the external and the superficial, and the re-establishment of a hierarchy on the spiritual level, an opening up of a path that leads deeper. This ultimate truth has no one fixed name. God's thinking is beyond human words, and man's thinking is only circling around the divinity of truth.'

The violent golds and purples and greens of the summer splash over nature. The ever-present flower arrangements speak to me not of perfection, but of love. So much of the care-in-detail is a way of making God's love visible, tangible, and not just a vague feeling. Yet in the hive of activity that is Caux, we carry the pain of our own continent and its divisions and conflicts. Some have been meeting every day just before lunch to pray. There are also constant meetings on different aspects on Caux next year, the 50th anniversary. Today a professional video crew arrive for one week, to make a short new promotional film. The Australian team who have brought with them a draft pictorial magazine are hard at work, as is Camilla Nelson with a team on the exhibition. What comes out of these meetings and this look at the history of the founders is the sense of urgency, the longing, the determination to rebuild a continent, and to heal the wounds of the war so as to make war an outlaw. Now in some ways Europe seems dozing or asleep, but do we not need to claim an eternal sense of urgency? Not one of human effort, but an opening of the heart and mind to the fact that there will always be a call from a suffering world to hear, if we listen, and there will always be a part that God is calling us to play in 'renewing the face of the earth'.

There has been a fair dose of the classic Caux magic. A German uses his own experience of disillusionment at the end of the war as a Nazi

with a communist in the eastern part of his own country - nearly fifty years later, she faces much the same problems. A former French MP and ambassador speaks with passion about his own experience of the reconciliation of Western Europe, and of the need to help ex-Yugoslavia, where his son is serving with the UN, to start to learn some of the same lessons. One of the senior men from the Franco-German ARTE television channel speaks about all that they have had to learn in order to work together, the real differences of approach, but the riches in putting out the same programmes at the same times in the two languages for the two countries - and beyond. We've been challenged to face our own nationalism, to see the evil of indifference, to reflect on the foundations of a healthy civil society, to ask ourselves how the hurts of the past can be healed - here the leader of the meeting asked us to stop and think for a moment about the hurts in our own lives, rather than instantly cast our minds to some inter-ethnic conflict further away from us.

'My country and my people have wounded so many nations around us, we have probably aroused more hatred against us than any other nation' says a Russian, adding that the Russians themselves have suffered more than a little. You must know the past in order to heal it, a Russian expert of the KGB archives says. We always have an element of choice, we never have to give in, adds another, not speaking from theory but from his experience of the labour camps and internal exile. 'Silence can be frightening, daunting. I tend to turn on the radio so as not to be confronted with myself and my problems,' says a young woman, who goes on to talk about how she has started to build a new relationship with her father. 'I was cynical about human nature because of experience back home in London, but I'm really enjoying myself here' says a black British, one of the students recruited to head a service team, here for the first time.

This session on 'Unity with diversity' ends, as it began, with puppets. The mouse complains that not enough food has been left lying around for his taste. There is a bucket at the wash-up for left overs to feed the chickens, enjoying what will be I guess a terminal summer holiday at the 'farm', and the mouse pleads for a special bucket for herself. Caux is neither a hotel nor a home, says a German, appreciating all the beauty of the place. 'We've learned to look behind the curtain of stereotypes,' he adds. Caux is a kind of nucleus of God's society, says a Russian journalist, who wants to make Caux better known through his writing. 'I don't believe in a mass turning to God,' says another, 'Each individual must build up his own spiritual life - and we must help each other. Moments of internal silence help.' A young Brit notices that the map of Europe, cut into a puzzle at the start of the session is still incomplete - but perhaps this is true of the reality of our continent. There is still much to be done, he notes.

We ended the session, and started the new week last night with another magical concert of classical music from two local musicians. As an encore, we were given a piece called 'The flight of the bumblebee'.

So sunny greetings from the hive,

Andrew

Andrew Stallybrass

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Caux, Monday 10th July, 1995

PRESS RELEASE

CAUX ANNIVERSARY LECTURES START - SWISS POLITICIAN SPEAKS

François Lachat, one of the founders of the Jura Canton, in Switzerland, last night appealed for openness of spirit in Switzerland, and sounded an alarm for the future of the Confederation. "I reject a turning in on ourselves; I refuse to accept that my country, Switzerland and the Jura, mummify themselves in a swollen selfishness; I refuse to accept a drying up of our vital energy," Lachat said. He expressed concern at the "identity reflex" of his Swiss-German compatriots, "a gut fear of anything that can look like a 'foreign judge' (a reference to the early history of the Swiss Confederation), and a totally irrational fear of a Great Germany." If things continued unchanged in this direction, he warned, "what has been done could be undone". The two language communities, Germanic and Latin, should redouble their efforts to understand each other.

Lachat expressed passionate support for the region - the level of government between the central State and the local, communal level. "The regions embody best the Europe of the conscience," he continued. He believed in a Europe enriched by its diversity, and which "tries to combat the new Bastilles of violence, drugs, irresponsibility, lack of respect for the other". In Lachat's view, it is the regions of Europe that will help to establish the right balance between security and freedom; between competition and cooperation. "Openness allows us to steer between the assimilation of minorities and separatism from the State," he concluded. Lachat, who was a member of the government of his Jura Canton for 16 years was giving the first "Caux anniversary lecture", an innovation in the sessions through the summer at the Moral Re-Armament conference centre in Caux, Switzerland.

These "anniversary lectures" are open to the public, and will take place every Monday through the 21st August, on important current themes. The Moral Re-Armament summer assembly opened this weekend, with some 300 people attending a session on "Unity with diversity - a consultation on the European continent".

For more information, please contact Andrew Stallybrass.

MRA is a way of life. Its goal is global transformation carried forward by people of different convictions and faiths who seek God's inspiration for individual and common action. As agents of change, they work for new motives and relationships at all levels of society, beginning in their own lives.