

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANOPAMA
CH - 1824 CAUX

Monday, 18th July, 1994

Dear friends,

The first session is coming to an end - I'll leave some space at the end of my letter to add something from the last meeting this morning. The next hours will see many leaving, and a change of style as others from the worlds of business and industry arrive. After lunch I drive my parents down to Geneva for 36 hours, the first leg of their journey home, exhausted but happy, like many after these full and varied days, which included waking to hear the latest news of the World Cup from my room-mate, when he came in from the very late night matches. Early this morning I could hear the supporters of victorious Brazil tooting their car horns and celebrating in Montreux from my bed!

There was a lively British-style debate on the generation gap, many winning little victories over their fear to have their say. My father was one of the proposers of the motion that 'There is no gap between the generations', seconded by a young Czech. To the surprise of some, in the light-hearted spirit of the genre, he was vigorously attacked and contradicted by my mother! The proposition lost, 51 votes to 49, with 42 abstentions, after a passionate plea that there was a gap but it could be overcome, so the only logical thing to do was to abstain. Many have been working at that gap from their different sides over these days.

We had a roller coaster evening of laughter and moving depth with the premiere of 'Stalling between two fools' a new 'cabaret' with Philip Tyndale-Biscoe and his wife, Vendela Löfgren. Sketches on demonstrating for peace, the busy executive who can give everything to his successive wives except his time, the wife who knows that extremist feminist ideology would have her feel exploited, but she's happy and fulfilled serving the one she loves... A French Bastille day concert of folk songs, complete with a British chorus in boaters, who wanted to salute their neighbours with a series of specially adapted popular songs.

I'm more aware than ever that my view is very, very limited. The questions, daily posed in silence, then discussed in the communities, have brought deep exchanges, but in closed groups, where a group of new friends rightly keep their deep sharing to themselves: 'What kind of person would I like to be in ten years time?' 'What would I like the world to become in ten years time?' There have been poetry readings and chamber concerts, between supper and the main evening programme; a lively third floor coffee bar for the night birds... A brilliant Russian pianist (who was here for the first time last year), humbly accompanying young, inexperienced players, playing a Polish composer for the Poles, who thanked him in Russian. An extraordinary final 'talent quest', where he had a queue of would-be concert pianists playing a simple Borodin piece with him. A professional New Zealand opera singer, Grant Dickson, threatening the chandelier in the great hall with the power of two stirring extracts from the Messiah, including 'The trumpet shall sound'. My 82-year-old mother being

dragged up onto the stage to dance with a ressurected 'Abba' rock group.

An outing day brought back many from picnics, swimming and walks with sunburned faces - we were blessed with a fine day, between days with thunder showers. A group of artists brought back an array of pictures for display in the dining room. I brought back a large selection of blisters from a long walk up the Dents du Midi with four Poles: my boots and I don't get on as yet, each is determined to break the will of the other!

A highlight of this last week - a landmark date for years to come, I suspect - was yesterday's live radio broadcast of the Protestant church service from the chapel of St. Michael and All Angels. The radio journalist introducing the service gave a clear and simple summary of Moral Re-Armament, and noted that the service was taking place in the context of the summer conferences. An African chorus led into the sermon on the ministry of reconciliation. A packed and varied congregation - and the radio audience - heard lay preacher Pierre Oko Mengue from Cameroun challenge the Swiss with the words of Frank Buchman from a 1935 speech: 'I see Switzerland a prophet among the nations, and a peacemaker in the international family...' Sylvie Söderlund, who was born and grew up in the village, played an important part in the service, beautifully singing three songs. Eight readers with a rich variety of accents read the prayers and Bible passages.

A television video crew have been filming and interviewing young people for a short documentary programme aimed at giving the Arab world a different picture of Western youth, showing that some are finding a purpose in life, a sense of calling. A Sheffield student, here for the first time, told how he'd seen and met the ARG (Artistic Resource Group) in his university. 'They had a purpose,' he said, and he'd written to ask if he could join them during the summer. He spoke of meeting in Caux 'enormous caring, open hearts, and a commitment to change'. 'Plenty of people know there are things that need changing. Here I found the courage,' he concluded. Edward Peters spoke of our need for vulnerable love, following the example of Jesus, and challenged all to 'a next step of obedience that keeps us young, whatever our age'.

In the final meeting, a young man referred to the previous day's sermon and said how he'd thought of an enemy from school days that he should seek reconciliation with when he went home. He told how in his community he'd spoken with an older person in a way he'd never thought possible: 'No-one that age had ever opened up to me before; I opened up to him. I talked to him as if he were my age.' An eighty-year-old recalled her reaction to the dropping of the first atomic bomb, and her realization that 'there is a greater power than atomic energy, and it's love'. She was followed by a younger person who said, 'We don't want to be preached at, but we do rely on your strength.' A young man added, 'I think I've really changed. I've learned in my community to listen with an open heart.' The participants ended by walking the road together from past, and present into the future, symbolically leaving behind (on a piece of paper) the things they wanted to leave behind, and then pinning down on the lawn, on another piece of paper, their hopes and commitments.

Warm regards from a Caux full of goings before the next comings,

Andrew Stallybrass