

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

PRIVATE

26th August, 1991

Dear friends,

Do you know the story of the earwig (insect) who fell over a cliff? As he went over the edge, he said, "'ere we go!". So, here we go, for the last time this summer, and I'm giving in to the temptation to mix two metaphors. The lemon of our strength has been squeezed out to the last drop; and yet the cup overflows abundantly - piled up, pressed down and running over (it couldn't quite do that with lemon juice, could it?) - with gratitude for all that has been given, during these weeks, and not least in this last week on 'Regions and communities in crisis - what can we learn from each other?'. The answer to the question is "a lot".

Now, you'll all have to make allowances for me: when weary, I know I get more emotional and sentimental. But I've rarely seen and heard such deep experiences so freely shared as during this last week: the Arab describing on the platform his first accidental meeting with a Jew, the Jew with the Arab, the Cambodian with a Khmer Rouge, from the movement responsible for those millions of deaths. Yet these encounters were not plotted or planned by human hand. The Jew, a Rabbi at that, was called in to translate with a Russian, so that encounter started by 'chance'. 'We each put our point of view in a mature dialogue,' the Arab student said, 'then we tried to "put on the other person's shoes".' It being the Sabbath, the Rabbi can't speak into a microphone, so he talks to the moderator of the meeting who repeats his remarks for the audience and the translators. The Khmer Rouge was not expected, he just turned up. He had been through a personal, family crisis of some pain. Was it this that brought him, in need? The spirits of Irène Laure and Frank Buchman and a host of others must be rejoicing in heaven.

There has been a magic alchemy of the spirit in having together people from so many suffering situations. What a week to live through with Soviet citizens from across that crumbling empire, with people from the Baltic states, following minute by minute the events there, from despair and deep concern to joy and relief. One of the conference organizers managed to phone through to friends in Moscow and say that we had been praying for them. He was told, 'We knew it and we felt it. We are at one with you in Caux.' A Russian said, 'The worst thing in our system was the fear that ruled our hearts - and that fear has gone.' Some of us have had a vivid first hand report from a young Russian woman who was there in the streets round the Russian Parliament. In one of the 'open forums', we've heard a Polish policeman apologise for his part in the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia that put an end to the Prague Spring on the anniversary of the day. We've lived with people from civil-war-torn Yugoslavia, from Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, Algeria, with the Egyptian whose father was killed in one of the wars against Israel, with those from South East Asia, Cambodia, Laos, Burma.

Many with deep hurts and terrible histories have found that they are not alone, that others understand their suffering, have shared it, have been through even worse experiences, and have found an inner freedom. Thus Cambodians from the killing fields have given a vision of healing fields, and helped others from other regions of conflict. Buddhists have shared deeply with Jews and Muslims;

Christians have learnt and listened to all three. A friend quoted to me a challenging phrase from Brother Roger of Taizé that seemed so appropriate: 'Will you seek in communion with God the vitality to keep you in union with the wounds of the human family?' We have ended the summer as we began it, with 'work and discussion communities' where much of this communion and vitality have been experienced.

A Czech brass band of 48 made a 25-hour one-way bus trip to be with us for a concert, and to liven up the meetings. On their arrival, they tossed their friend John Faber into the air outside the front door to express their happiness to be here, and their gratitude. Their musical farewell outside the same door blocked the traffic and drew passers-by. Earlier, we enjoyed several performances of a remarkable prize-winning radio play from Prague (by Jaroslava Moserova, a remarkable woman doctor, sculptor, writer, member of the new parliament) 'Such a nice boy', produced by Frances Colquhoun, and acted alone by Chris Channer. The accompanying final press story gives some of the statistics of those who came, but we have received so much from countries we know so little of. 'They are no longer countries on a map,' said one of the young New Zealanders who has helped here all summer, 'but faces and friends.'

Last week, I promised you some more on the 'Preservation of Creation' forum, and thanks to Alan Channer, here is a flavour. It's not usual to see two nuclear physicists embracing each other - at least not when one of them is the habited abbess of a 12th Century convent, but these dialogues have seen such out-of-the-ordinary exchanges and real friendships as that between Hortense Berthet, the abbess, and Victor Weisskopf, Professor Emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Some 40 scientists, religious and politicians and industrialists, young and old, gathered for the fourth consecutive year.

The abbess said, 'Let us learn to fill our hearts with beauty. Let us teach our children to savour the fragile splendour of the rose, the wisdom of the antheap and the blackbird with its song... You cannot help wanting to preserve what you have discovered with a sense of wonder.' Prof. Weisskopf added, 'As scientists, many of us have had profound experiences of awe and reverence before the Universe. The sacredness of nature is in the heart of every true scientist, whether he knows it or not. Efforts to safeguard and cherish the environment must be infused with a vision of the sacred. Science and technology are not enough to deal with the human predicament. Faith is also extremely important.'

Dr Paul Laufs, deputy leader of the CDU in the German Parliament, said, 'It has taken 100 years to curb capitalism in its social aspects; now we need to make it conscious of its ecological responsibilities... It won't matter what Europe does to reduce CO2 emissions if China increases coal consumption over the next few years. These global problems can only be solved internationally, but it is difficult to get the preconditions in place. Doing so can begin in a room like this.' A Canadian-born Buddhist monk, who spent 9 years in the forests of Thailand, said, 'If development misses the human factors, it misses the point. We should aim at sustainable human development, which includes a spiritual development that we can all be part of.' A Brazilian professor spoke of the dangers of just treating symptoms rather than going to the root of the disease, which is spiritual pollution. 'The environment can't be cleaned up without industrialists,' said one of the industrial conference organizers - and indeed there seemed to be a mutual enriching in the fact that for the first time, the environmental issues were being addressed in the heart of a Caux industrial conference.

The cup flows over - and the page fills and spills. There are so many more vignettes in my mind and heart, and my note book. A Turkish friend, deeply moved, recalling her first experience of change, 'I knew there was a God, and

He was holding my hand.' An Algerian and fellow Muslim tells her he dropped a tray thinking about what she had said. A Supreme Court judge from El Salvador, who told how he had been an alcoholic, and how, now freed, he was working to restore civil rights and to reconcile guerillas and government after 11 years of civil war. He thanked MRA for the support and encouragement he and his colleagues had received in this task. 'Thank God who led me here to have these experiences that teach us so much,' he said.

Catholic and Protestant from Northern Ireland have spoken together. A Fijian, a retired NCO in the British Army, who had served there, met one of the men who had been held without trial in an internment camp for which he'd been responsible. 'I'm glad we're meeting here, in these circumstances and surroundings,' said the ex-internee. There have been so many stories and clear instances of rock-like experiences of change, symbols. The story of the Jewish woman discovering that she lives in a Palestinian home, meeting the former inhabitants, giving the blind old father a branch from the lemon tree he had planted, and the vivid picture of the old man on sleepless nights clutching the withered branch. That home now becoming a creche and day care centre for Palestinian children.

A story of illegitimacy, and the hurt of a child of eight, but later healed by the loving hand of a heavenly father. Two brothers finding a unity beyond words in just walking together. Old Dr Jamali, now 88 years old, probably the last survivor of the foreign ministers who signed the United Nations Charter in San Francisco in 1946, expressing his passionate belief 'in the middle path of brotherhood, reconciliation and democracy'. A young Englishman claiming freedom from 'the tremendous strain of always knowing best'. A Swiss Protestant minister apologising to the Jews for the way that Christians so often link them with the love of money. 'It is we who need to be freed from the love of Mammon,' she says.

And talking of money, the treasurer informs us that the summer brings in many gifts, and many bills as well; but it is still too early to have much of an idea of the overall financial situation. But there are many touching marks of sacrifice and commitment. A retired Australian has pledged a dollar a month, in response to an appeal for regular, year-round giving. 'It all adds up,' she says, and 'Many of us could give a little, and if many did, it could add up!' We were very touched when one of the young East Europeans said he wanted to give one roof tile (there is an appeal under way for 20'000 of them) for every day of his stay, and produced a hard-won \$100 bill.

Saturday afternoon saw some 250 people from the region pour in for an open day, in response to an invitation in the local press, and leaflets in the village and others handed out by volunteers in Montreux market. Some 50 Swiss friends came in to organize it all, with a well-planned route around the house, and a team of guides. Many visitors left behind the suspicions of decades. 'This is an event,' said one. Another called the building 'a shared experience'. One woman bought a booklet on listening, read it on the train up to the Rochers de Naye, and dropped in on her way back to buy 20 further copies for friends!

Much new life is stirring in people. There has been pain and tears. But let us now cherish together in prayer these fresh shoots of faith, and cherish too those who are still on the brink of decisions, of surrender, of launching out afresh in faith. This is an end, but it is also a beginning.

With much gratitude and affection from,

Andrew Stallybrass, with the help of a team of secretaries, and volunteer folders, envelope-stuffers. Thank you for your thanks. It is a privilege to be here and to act as scribe.