

18th August, 1986

Dear friends,

Another full week, and again, the challenge of distilling onto paper something of the essence of these incredibly stretching days. Do please pray for us all as we head into the last lap. Now we are launched into the dialogue of the continents. My dictionary defines a dialogue as a conversation between two or more people. All I can say is that our dialogue involves a lot more than two! There are two sides to a conversation, and neither are easy: we must speak the truth as we see it, from the heart; and we must listen, and try to hear what lies behind the words.

But the week started with the conclusion of the Americas-hosted time, and an amazing meeting in English (at least American English!) and Spanish, which saw 34 speakers following each other onto the platform - and I may add that we weren't even late for lunch. Many Africans and Asians were already arriving, and many Americans, from North and especially from the South, have stayed on.

'I learnt how to think in Harvard, but it was here in Caux that I learnt how to love and care,' said one American. 'There are some 80 of us from the US here,' noted another, who went on to ask, 'How do we do for each other what some have done for us here?' She spoke of her conviction to organise, with her husband and others, a series of training courses and weekends. An Indo-Chinese refugee said, 'I go back to the world of refugees, to my world. You all opened your hearts to me.' A Guatemalan apologised for his hatred towards the Americans in the past. A Marxist-inclined atheist trade-unionist from Latin America was seriously taken in hand by his two Central American room-mates, who gave him a crash course introduction to the Bible!

Two large groups of Japanese were with us for a week, and many of them spoke before they left. One family spoke of how they had discovered the quiet time here, and how they intended to continue experimenting at home. A young woman in a wheel chair told how depressed and low in spirits she had been in coming. 'I have found my way to solve my own problems,' she said. 'The four standards will be my guide. I want to work to help my fellow disabled,' she concluded.

We were from 53 countries and all the continents for the opening evening of the dialogue. There was a magic moment of silent prayer, with a darkened stage before a Philippino candle dance by four participants from four different Asian countries - a powerful symbol of hope. And the rapt children on the floor at the foot of the platform were a reminder that families have been present and welcome throughout, as promised on the invitation. Indeed a very young chorus have given us a Southern African song, and a version of 'The polar bear'.

It has also been a week of Swiss outreach. I include the press release we did on the visit of Alexandre Hay, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross. He spoke in the evening, and came already in the afternoon to visit the house and meet a cross-section of participants. The communiqué went out on the Swiss German midday radio news the following day, and was used by Radio Suisse

Internationale, the Swiss world service. 'L'Hebdo', the French-language Swiss newsweekly carried a four page feature on MRA and the centre under the headline 'Christ stopped off in Caux' (a reference to a famous Italian book and film). The tone, typical for the magazine, is rather cynical, but the article ends with a good interview with Daniel Mottu. Then yesterday we received the visit of the President of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, who took part in our church service up the hill, and then spoke in the morning meeting, greeting us all in the name of his federation.

On Friday evening, we welcomed a 16-strong Tibetan cultural group with a song that had been written for the Dalai Lama's visit to Panchgani, on the great rivers of Asia that have their source in Tibet, and the life-giving, healing waters that will flow out from their land. We admired the richly embroidered silks of their multi-coloured costumes, and their extraordinary gold-gilt masks. Their concluding scene, complete with yak, most realistically played by two men, was a tour de force.

I realise that I've said nothing in previous letters about Nancy Ruthven's new play, 'The widening gyre'. It is about the relationship between England and Ireland, and it is a blockbuster in my view. Superbly acted by three professionals, well staged, and magnificently written, it opens up us Brits to deep and painful truths about ourselves and our history. All our countries need this kind of search for God's truths about our past and our selves.

Cheers,

Andrew Stallybrass

Saturday, 16th August 1986

Alexandre Hay, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross last night warned that the situation of the Cambodian refugees might become a sore that could poison the world as the situation in the Palestinian camps has poisoned the Middle East. He was speaking to an international audience at the Moral Re-Armament conference centre in Caux, Switzerland. He appealed to the international community to take concerted humanitarian action to help the 250'000 refugees on the Thai-Cambodian border, and likened their situation to that of the Palestinians in 1948-49. 'It is scandalous to see that governments are not prepared to solve the humanitarian aspects of the problem that can be solved,' he said.

'Universal peace is not for tomorrow, but the methods of conflict too often touch the innocent,' he continued. 'The Red Cross itself is an act of peace, of reconciliation, of caring for friend and foe alike. We are contributing towards the creation of a spirit of peace. These problems of peace are close to your concerns in Moral Re-Armament, your work for reconciliation and a better world. There is no more noble task.' He concluded, 'Much links us together. We all need moral re-armament and we all need the Red Cross. We will never be too many undertaking this difficult task of bringing people together. But neither you nor we should lose hope.'

Mr. Hay answered questions from participants to the present 'dialogue between the continents' in Caux, among them several from areas of conflict where the Red Cross is at work - a Namibian, a Cambodian refugee, a Guatemalan exile.