

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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pour le Réarmement moral

CAUX

CENTRE DE RENCONTRES
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10th August 1998, Caux, Switzerland

Press release

SWITZERLAND MUST NOT BE A SCAPEGOAT, SAYS ISREALI JEW

Yehezkel Landau, the co-director of the "Open House" centre for Jewish-Arab reconciliation in Ramle, Israel, spoke today of the "unfinished agenda between Jews and European Christians". He referred to the current discussions and accusations about gold and Swiss banks' behaviour during the war. "Switzerland must not be singled out as a scapegoat," he said. "Gold and money should not be made the focus of our thinking about the past," he went on, "This is liable to stir up people's prejudices about the Jews; we forget that one human life is worth more than all the gold on this planet". Landau, a graduate of both Harvard Divinity School and a yeshiva (academy of Jewish studies) in Israel, was speaking at the opening of an eight-day session entitled "Agenda for Reconciliation - Healing the Past, Forging the Future" at the international Moral Re-Armament conference centre in Caux, Switzerland, attended by some 530 people from more than 60 countries.

The "Open House" centre had been set up in the former home of Landau's wife's family, refugees from Bulgaria who arrived in Israel in 1948, but the house had previously belonged to a Palestinian family who had been expelled. The Biblical Jubilee concept, Landau noted, was of restoring property and forgiving debts after fifty years. "Some Jewish leaders press European politicians and bankers to pay restitution for lost Jewish properties and accounts," Landau continued, "but the other side of the moral coin, usually ignored, is the Palestinians' legitimate claims on us for their displacement and dispossession."

Landau confessed that he was more anxious than ever before for the future of his region. He called for an immediate end to the Israeli government's policy of demolishing Palestinian homes, which he described as "a crime and an atrocity", while also calling on his Muslim brothers and sisters to denounce violence perpetrated by Islamic extremists. He pleaded for the creation of a "peace corps" of Jewish and Arab Israelis - and others - to help rebuild Palestinian homes, "and to rebuild dignity and hope as well as homes".

Speaking with Landau on the theme of "Healing history - remembering, restoring and forgiving" were a traditional leader from Fiji, in the Pacific, a senior Aboriginal advisor to the Australian government on health matters, and one of the directors of an American "think-tank". Joseph Montville, the Director of the Preventive Diplomacy Programme at the Washington Center for Strategic and International Studies, spoke on the "incredible liberating effect of acknowledging past wrongs". "Reconciliation is the real realpolitik," he went on, citing the pioneering work in this area of the Caux centre, in the post-war reconciliation between France and Germany. "The lessons learned here need to become part of realistic policies for managing human relations. They can be a formula for survival into the 21st century," he concluded.

The Caux conference centre will draw some 2'000 people during the six weeks of summer conferences on the overall theme of 'Changing the Ways of the World'.

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15th August 1998, Caux, Switzerland

Press release

WRITER'S PEACE EFFORTS IN ETHIOPIAN-ERITREAN CONFLICT

A leading Ethiopian writer spoke yesterday about his efforts to defuse "the mounting crisis" in the Horn of Africa. The two neighbours, Ethiopia and Eritrea, "sisters in many ways, are immersed in the tension of conflict with each other," Mammo Wudneh, the President of the Ethiopian Writers' Association said, adding "the Horn of Africa is one of the world's most explosive regions". On his initiative, last June, he had called together religious leaders, Christians, Muslims, and the other faith communities, for an "inter-faith peace meeting" which had been chaired by the Ethiopian Patriarch, Abune Paulos, to see what part they could play in defusing the tension. A standing group of these leaders is now working "applying the spirit of Caux" to stop the escalation "as both sides are arming rapidly".

"We need preventive diplomacy," Wudneh went on, in an appeal to the international community to provide "inspired statesmanship, in order to avoid a wider conflict that could involve all our neighbours in the Nile valley and the Red Sea region". He was committed to this task "as a patriot responsible for a moral re-arming of Ethiopia, where we hold out our hands, trusting in God and His guidance at this critical time".

He was speaking at an African seminar during an eight-day session entitled "Agenda for Reconciliation - Healing the Past, Forging the Future" at the international Moral Re-Armament conference centre in Caux, Switzerland, attended by some 530 people from more than 60 countries.

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12th August 1998, Caux, Switzerland

Press release

POLITICIANS' ROUND TABLE : ALTERNATIVE ROADS TO PEACE

Political personalities from France, Great Britain, Japan and Somalia spoke last night at the close of a round table meeting that brought together 36 participants from 22 countries. Speaking on the theme "Power politics : alternative ways of peace-making" Bernard Stasi, the Ombudsman to the French Republic, former Cabinet Minister and Member of Parliament gave three examples of areas where cities and local authorities have taken important international initiatives. Firstly, the twinning of French and German towns and villages (now some 2,000 in number) had helped to give a human, cultural and sporting dimension to the reconciliation between the former enemies in the years after the Second World War. Then during the cold war years, similar East-West twinings had helped to make breaches in the iron curtain. A third, more recent chapter, where much further progress could be made, Stasi noted, was the cooperation between local authorities in the rich and the poor parts of the world. "Through private associations and the networks that make up civil society, we can undertake projects that touch the daily lives of many in these countries - and it's an antidote to racism for us," he said. "It amounts to a diplomacy of peoples, a movement that is under way, that seeks to complement rather than replace classical diplomacy."

He was followed by Sir Jim Lester, for 23 years, until last year, a British Member of Parliament, and now an advisor to the World Bank. He expressed pride in the Private Members Bill that he had presented and passed allowing local authorities to support aid projects overseas without passing via the central government. "Laws last longer than any members of parliament," he said, "but the greatest challenge for us all is the transfer of resources to the poorest, to the one person in four of humanity who try to live on less than one dollar a day."

Yukihisa Fujita, member of the Japanese Diet, from the Democratic Party, spoke of "the superpower of citizens' networks" which had been mobilised for example in the recent and successful campaign against anti-personnel land mines. Non-governmental organisations "react quicker, are often better informed, and can mobilise public opinion better, by touching the nerves and emotions of people," he said.

They were speaking during an eight-day session entitled "Agenda for Reconciliation - Healing the Past, Forging the Future" at the international Moral Re-Armament conference centre in Caux, Switzerland, attended by some 530 people from more than 60 countries.

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RECONCILERS TREATED AS TRAITORS OR LUNATICS

Dr Mato Zovkic, Catholic theologian from Sarajevo, said today that in Bosnia, those who work for reconciliation are often treated by their own communities as traitors or lunatics. "These tiny dissident voices have no place. Each community listens only to its own media," he said. There would be fresh elections in the autumn of this year, but he feared that most people would vote for ethnic parties. Many, including some of the religious leaders react that they have done nothing wrong, their community has done nothing to apologise for. "It is true," Zovkic said, "that the crimes of individuals should not be ascribed to entire communities." He gave the example of his own efforts to keep links with three Muslim theologians whom he had got to know before the war. "It is vitally important not to break down existing bridges," he continued. "As communities, we need hope. There must be a way out. God, who put us all in Bosnia, wants us to go on living together." He pleaded for foreign investment, and continuing help and interest from outside: "Please come, please stay neutral, please try to be universal," he said. He concluded, "Foreign troops are not invaders, they are real peace-makers."

He was speaking with a Somalian former ambassador, who after six years in solitary confinement in prison now describes himself as a full-time peace-maker; an 86-year-old Japanese pioneering woman, working to heal her country's relations with her former enemies; a young Brazilian teacher and voluntary worker. They were addressing an eight-day session entitled "Agenda for Reconciliation - Healing the Past, Forging the Future" at the international Moral Re-Armament conference centre in Caux, Switzerland, attended by some 530 people from more than 60 countries.

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