

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

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Dear friends,

So summer is here at last in Caux, with meals out on the terrace, and hordes of people, and long hours and long talks and long walks - and Monday morning letters. (The wild strawberries are ripe already, but the raspberries still have some way to go; the seasons are ahead of schedule, and the wild flowers are long past their prime). Yet in a spiritual sense, there is a strange touch of spring and autumn too: planting and harvesting at the same time, reaping the fruit that God and men have sown over the years, and at the same time sowing for decades to come. There's even a touch of winter as we pray for sick friends.

Above all, we feel an overwhelming gratitude for all God has given in the week that we've experienced. It's hard to remember that last Monday morning I was asking myself if there was material for such a letter, as the opening session was only in the afternoon. All I could say then was that we had a great sense of expectancy, and that we would start with a bang, with the house full. But that seems far more than a week ago. The days have been so full, and we've had such a sense of history in the making. To hear three Soviets (one exile, the other two from Moscow) speak together, with discipline, passion and gratitude, apologising for the suffering that their country has caused, led me to feel that these were days I would remember forty years from hence (if I'm given the years), in the way that some of our friends remember hearing Irène Laure reaching out to the Germans all those years ago. We have the sense that another great chapter in the history of Caux and of our world work is opening.

Yesterday, we were 540 people in the house, from 43 countries, 80 from 11 countries of East and Central Europe, with so many unknown faces in the crowded dining rooms, from North and South, as well as East and West. Many children, helping us not to become too serious or intent. In the next few days, our numbers go over 600 for the first but not the last time this summer. Last year, we considered anything over 500 as 'house full'. So far, all the participants are in our beds, thanks to hired military bunks in dormitories, offices converted into bed-rooms, camp beds, families of four and five sleeping in the same room, and a saintly labour by the house-keeping team so that we can fill again every bed, every room, the moment it's freed. We're grateful to feel that as well as the marvellous team who've come to help - an Antipodean contingent, young Lebanese, Nigerians and Indians, several less usual Swiss... - there is a world family supporting us in prayer.

The morning before the official opening, Sam Pono, marvellously recovered from his prison ordeal, introduced two senior African National Congress men from South Africa for an informal session. One had been held for 21 years on the top security Robben Island; the other, condemned to death has spent 30 years in exile. They have come to Caux to prepare themselves for their coming responsibilities, and for an hour and a half they spoke with freedom from bitterness of their experiences and their hopes. When Pieter Horn joined them, telling of his two young daughters and the decision that he and other whites have taken to accept a lower standard of living, of education and health care, for the sake of raising the standards for the majority to share equally, one caught a glimpse of a new South Africa.

Enclosed you will find copies of the three press stories we've sent out so far. They give a dry and factual idea of some of the best of what has been said. But there has also been much humour, laughter: talk of family life, with roses and rolling pins vividly illustrating the simple points being made. There has been deep sharing of painful past experience, and an opening of windows to a new history and geography of suffering of peoples we have often ignored. Yet so often, it has been redeemed experience, suffering not so much healed as integrated with the present and the future, with bitterness and anger cured.

We've had short, half-hour 9.15 sessions, sharing personal experience that deepened an understanding of the basics of MRA, under the heading 'Roads to real freedom'. Three Lebanese spoke of 'finding freedom from fear', crossing the bitter divides of their torn country. A Cypriot couple who had been forced to flee from their home with nothing but the front door key spoke on 'finding freedom from blame'. Then after coffee in the entrance hall, we've had the main morning session. A Polish woman, with Jewish blood, recalled a three week journey as a child in a cattle train, being deported into the Soviet Union. She told how forty years later she had returned to Poland for the first time, and at Auschwitz, through a deep experience of the Cross, at last experienced liberation from her hatred.

There have been seminars on the minorities of the Soviet Union from a Moscow professor, who called for a 'denazification of the Soviet past' as the 'seeds of nationalism and national socialism have not been destroyed in the USSR'. 'We need healing,' he said. There have also been seminars on Slovenia and Estonia. Over the weekend, a round table with more limited numbers, has allowed a deeper discussion of some of the many issues raised. For example, the future of a united Germany, and getting beyond the widely felt fears that are reflected in the wild and misplaced remarks of the little lamented British Minister, Nicolas Ridley. One of the Poles apologised to the Germans, and thanked the Kriegs, faithful team-mates from Berlin: 'They've helped me to be free from my hatred for the Germans. We have no common language, but we share common experiences, and that can help us more than a common language to understand each other.'

Participants walked up the hill to Haut de Caux to listen to a

local brass band one evening. Twenty young people sat on the grass round a Soviet dissident, questioning him and drawing on his experiences of faith. A French-donated minibus will soon have made three round trips ferrying groups to and from Caux. There have been daily times of prayer and silence in the Catholic chapel for those carrying the conferences. The Catholic priest responsible for the chapel noted that it is dedicated to Saint Joseph, who never said a word in the Bible, so it's a good place for silence!

Two unexpected Soviet trade and business men have just arrived - Caux invitations, unknown to us, have been circulating in Moscow. In an unplanned way, just after their arrival, they met two of the Swiss ladies who were involved in the beginnings of Caux, and had an introduction to the history of MRA. Several of the new Polish team who are taking on the Jaroslaw centre are here for their first real experience of MRA in an international setting. On Sunday, an Estonian minister preached the sermon in the Protestant Church, another moment of magic and history. Another of the Soviets (there have been more than 20 in the house) expressed amazement at finding himself in a queue at the buffet with Queen Anne of Romania. 'This could only happen in Caux,' he said to Ruth Mackenzie, who pointed out to him that while he was expressing his amazement, he'd lost his place in the queue to the lady concerned!

An East German church theatre group have twice produced an evening of sketches and scenes, drawing on classical and modern authors. In the pre-change East Germany, they called their presentation 'a programme' and not 'a play', since plays were subject to censorship and programmes were not. A scene from Dostoyevsky's 'The Brothers Karamazov' (written in 1880) presented an immobile Christ before the Grand Inquisitor accused of offering people a freedom they are not equipped to handle. Another scene, with stylized masks, presented the difficult relations between the group and an outsider, someone different.

We hope to be able to digest something of this rich diet before the industrial conference opens on Wednesday. It will take time. So many amazing experiences are washing over us... I'll end with a Hindu prayer that Vijay shared with some of us the other day: 'May the evil man become good, and may the good man have peace. May he who has peace become free, and may he who is free make others free.'

With prayerful greetings from the part of the world family gathered here,

Andrew Stallybrass

MORAL RE-ARMAMENT PRESS OFFICE

Caux, 10th July, 1990

The Iron Curtain that has divided Europe for the last 45 years must not be replaced by a similar division between the rich North from the poor South, warned Professor Werner Stauffacher, former Vice-Rector of the University of Lausanne. He was speaking at the opening of this summer's Moral Re-Armament conferences at the Mountain House centre in Caux Switzerland, last night. 'The Iron Curtain allowed us for all these years not to think too much about the countries to the East - that was up to the masters of the Kremlin,' the professor said. 'We were able to concentrate on ourselves. There was a certain stability that was profitable to us - not to those in the East - and that stability has vanished in a few months,' he continued.

Many in the South, he said, feared that Europe would now concentrate on its own problems, and forget what is happening elsewhere. 'And yet,' he continued, 'we cannot be valid partners for the rest of the world if we do not succeed in solving these problems on our own continent.'

He was echoed by Professor Stanislaw Stomma, the oldest serving member of the Polish Senate. Warsaw and Frankfurt were an hour's flight apart, and yet the contrasts between the two halves of the continent were 'mad'. The two parts were dependent on each other, and such contrasts must be ended. 'We have crossed the threshold to a new era,' he said.

Professor Stauffacher spoke of the justified and the more ambiguous satisfactions these changes have provoked in the West: joy at a road opening up towards freedom for millions of people, but also a certain self-satisfaction at being right and being on the right side. There are also justified fears for the future - political and economic problems demand swift answers, but there is also a more ambiguous, selfish fear that the West may have to pay a heavy bill for these changes that it has itself desired and called for. He cited the example of Switzerland, where it had taken decades for the cantons to arrive at a measure of fiscal solidarity between richer and poorer regions. The new Europe faces the same challenge - but does not have several decades in which to find the answers. 'But', he asked, 'are we ready to search in faith and hope?'

The two professors were speaking at the start of a week-long session on the theme 'Neighbours, nations, East and West learning from each other', which has drawn participants from 33 countries of Europe, the 'South', and from Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and from different parts of the Soviet Union including the Baltic republics.

The conferences, with the overall theme of 'Freeing the forces of change' continue until 26 August.

Caux, 11th July, 1990

A senior Italian and European politician yesterday expressed warm thanks to the peoples of Eastern Europe for the fresh impulse for freedom and democracy that is sweeping the world. Giovanni Bersani, who until last year was the longest serving member of the European Parliament, and is now the Honorary President of the Parliamentary Association of the Lomé Convention (which links the European Community with developing countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific), was speaking at a meeting on 'New perspectives on democracy in Europe' at the Moral Re-Armament conference centre in Caux, Switzerland.

'Democracy in many of our West European countries looks tired,' he said. Citizens felt divided from their leaders; individualism, consumerism and selfishness had weakened the spirit of nations. 'We need a replenishment of the soul that I believe the peoples of the East will give us, filtered through the sufferings of half a century of struggle,' Bersani said. He continued, 'Thank you for this new impulse that started in your countries, with small groups of people, and is now reaching out to the whole world.'

He spoke of the extraordinary movement that has smashed down walls and beaten down seemingly all-powerful forces, an empire covering half the earth, without violence. This movement, he noted, had started in the hearts of ordinary people, an electrician and a few workers in Gdansk. Its leaders included a musician, an historian, a philosopher. 'People without weapons, force or strength have overthrown this immense obstacle built like a defiant challenge in the face of history,' he said. 'There lies the lesson for us and our tired democracies,' he continued. 'Our brothers to the East are helping us to create a new solidarity. The name "Solidarnosc" is at the heart of this whole new phase of European history.' 23 countries in Africa, Bersani claimed, have in recent months started to respond to their peoples' demand for radical change. The justice they longed for, he said, would come through greater freedom and respect for human rights.

The two parts of Europe, Bersani concluded, 'have a great responsibility for the world'. The new Europe 'must turn its back on any temptation to become a selfish fortress closed in on itself'. Humanity was heading towards unity based on the values that were now coming to the fore.

Bersani was speaking at a session on the theme 'Neighbours, nations, East and West learning from each other', with participants from Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, and from different parts of the Soviet Union including the Baltic republics.

Pavel Litvinov, grandson of Stalin's Foreign Minister, a Soviet dissident now in exile in the USA, also spoke. He talked of the 'simple heroic acts of hundreds of thousands' who had risked prison, mental hospital and labour camps. 'Our country cannot find freedom when we still oppress others,' he said. He spoke of

his own experience of internal exile in Siberia, and then noted the irony that some were arrested for wanting to leave the USSR, while it was the KGB itself that had recommended him to leave the country. The work ahead was still harder and more complicated 'to break the circle of hatred'. 'Many hatreds had raised their ugly heads,' Litvinov said. Nationalists who had themselves been oppressed were now becoming oppressors of others. 'The ideas of Moral Re-Armament help us to look in on ourselves,' he noted. 'This is the most urgent problem for Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.'

Caux, 15th July, 1990

A journalist and philosopher from Moscow today called for Russian repentance.

'We Soviets are guilty before so many peoples', Vladimir Zelinski said, 'before the Lebanese, the Poles, the Lithuanians, the Czechs, the Afghans, and so many others.' He told how he had seen in a TV documentary Soviet produced artillery destroying Beirut, and described his 'strong feeling of shame'. A young East German had just spoken about the breaking down of the Berlin Wall, he noted, and went on, 'These walls must be broken down first of all within our souls.' He continued, 'We don't have a free Russia and an oppressed one. The two Russias are intermingled within us. We must win a greater space for freedom inside each one of us.' Only repentance, winning a greater inner freedom, and individual responsibility could solve the many problems the Soviet Union faced, and create a Europe united on human values, of freedom and the worth of the individual, he said.

Zelinski was speaking at a meeting on 'New voices in Europe' at the Moral Re-Armament conference centre in Caux, Switzerland, in the framework of a session attended by 540 people from 43 countries, including 80 from 11 countries of Eastern and Central Europe.

Zelinski was followed by Jean-Marie Daillet, a French Christian Democrat Member of Parliament. Daillet warned that Europeans on both sides of the old divides should beware of replacing old injustices with new ones. 'It would be a tragedy', he said, 'if those who emerge from a system of inhuman collectivism only discover the inhuman side of capitalism.' At a time of progress towards military disarmament, he noted the importance of an effort to strengthen and indeed rearm minds and spirits. He concluded, 'There is no stronger weapon in the world than truth, though it is a difficult search, and no-one else can do it for us.'