

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

PRIVATE

15th July, 1991

Dear friends,

After a couple of days during which you could have lost your way on the terrace without a compass in the fog/cloud/rain, the air is cool and clear. If there wasn't a bit of hill in the way, we could check out our flat in Geneva. (Some complain that they feel lost without a weather report at the start.) Last night we were roused from our beds by thunderous fireworks in the lake off Montreux, celebrating the French national day of the 14th July: wave on wave of bursting balls of coloured stars. Now that strange pink early-morning light is touching the mountains, and we seem headed for more hot days. It's only a week since we launched out into the summer - that seems hard to believe.

It is simply staggering all that can press in to one week of seven days, with only 24 hours to each day! The Swiss Ambassador to the UN in Geneva wrote after last Sunday's reception: 'This day spent in the marvellous framework of "Mountain House" has helped us the better to understand the aims Moral Re-Armament pursues, and the methods it uses to attain those ends. We appreciated the spirit behind the talks we had, based on the idea of dialogue, of tolerance and respect for political, cultural and social diversity. It is a good thing that a meeting place exists in Caux. The things we heard shared - some of them most movingly - are the best proof that such a platform matches a need, and contributes towards better understanding between individuals coming from such different backgrounds. This is an important factor in the more balanced and serene international relations that we all long for. Thank you for such a day, so rich humanly and intellectually.'

Then there have been regular closed afternoon meetings with all those from Eastern and Central Europe. Many deep feelings are stirring. One young woman walked out of a showing of the Irène Laure film, unable to face its message of reconciliation. After a two-hour talk with David Channer, she bought a copy of the video. A young Chinese Malaysian has overcome her hatred of the Malays. But so many more healings of hurts and hates still wait for the miracle. Karl Mitterdorfer (see the accompanying press story) spoke of the lifting of the concrete carpet that communist ideology had laid over the conflicts between communities in Eastern Europe. Perhaps there is a new Irène Laure among us, wrestling with similar hates, and whose healing may have similar repercussions in the years to come.

I am struck by the feeling that people are being led to us. On Monday, a Soviet journalist on Izvestia 'phoned to say that he'd just come back from holiday, had found the invitation for the Sunday reception on his desk, was sorry he hadn't replied, but could he come up on Tuesday. The meeting, on the moral and spiritual foundations of democracy, also gave the ABC of MRA. Afterwards, he thanked Jens Wilhelmsen, who led the meeting, for talking about listening to the voice of conscience, and saying you didn't have to believe in God to do that. He left promising to write a major article for his 12 million circulation newspaper. The same day, we received for a few hours the famous Bishop Tökes, one of the key figures at the start of the Romanian revolution. One of his aides had rung from Geneva to say he wanted to come and get to know

MRA. After lunch, he spoke over coffee with a group about the problems of nationalism and hatred that he faces. He said, 'I find here a spiritual dimension I have not found elsewhere,' and he expressed the hope that he could come back again for longer. As he left at the end of a short visit, Professor Guido de Marco, current President of the General Assembly of the United Nations, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta, said, 'I am very glad I came. This has been an inspiring day for me.' (See also the press story).

The same evening, we enjoyed one of the most remarkable programmes I've ever seen in the theatre: a Bulgarian mime group of 12 on stage, 4 of them deaf and dumb. Their leader explained that their art was talking from deep within their souls. He spoke of the need for silence, music and dreams. 'We are just amateur dreamers,' he said, going on to explain that their motto was, 'We will survive because we have love.' They brought out the child in all of us, and indeed, they presented a special show for children from the conference and outside on the lawn one morning. We look forward to seeing them on stage again this coming Tuesday. Meanwhile, they work hard here and there, and labour to understand all that's going on. In our 'community', a young Czech who had shared her feelings against the Russians volunteered to translate for them, into Russian.

A series of sketches by the 'Euro-construction company' have illustrated the theme of building the new Europe, underlining the need for teamwork and a plan, and the vision of a community open to the world, not an inward-looking fortress. A puppet professor opened the two day education seminar with a 'speech' about the Gordian knot - a most impressive jumble of rope; and the educators have been hard at work, untying knots.

On Thursday, the East and Central Europeans all left early by bus, with some Swiss guides, for a visit to Central Switzerland. By boat and foot, they went to the meadow beside the Four Cantons Lake, near Luzern, where the founding fathers of the Swiss Confederation swore their oath to stick together, in 1291. The day gave them an introduction to Swiss history and democracy. One of the Swiss expressed how much it meant to her to see her country and its history through the eyes of others. One Pole noted, 'Up until now, there was always someone above us who always planned and decided everything, but now we have to learn to think and decide for ourselves.' The following day, Kim Beazley gave them a briefing on the nuts and bolts of a democratic system, from secret ballots to adequate research facilities for MPs.

Now we are launching out into another segment of this opening session, one that could hardly be more topical. A Serbian nationalist leader was brought in quite unexpectedly by a Yugoslav now living in Montreux. Soviet participants are arriving. We've just welcomed three friends from Romania, overjoyed to be back after their first visit to Caux last year. So the turbulent torrent of new life flows on. Perhaps the Bulgarians should teach us all to communicate without words. Certainly that would solve the problems of the translators' sore throats!

With friendly greetings from the Caux fraternity,

Andrew Stallybrass