

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

Tuesday, 25th August 1992

Dear friends,

For the last time this summer, I sit down to send you my view of Caux. What a summer it has been, and how many reasons for gratitude there are! The house and the dining room are emptying fast, though the Caux Round Table of senior businessmen from Japan, America and Europe continues until tomorrow. And the days are still more hectic, with planning meetings on the work of the house, sessions for next summer, parts of the world and the work in need. The days have been very full, and I've had little chance to take notes on walks or runs for a scenic report, but the weather continues fine and warm, and the amazing peaceful balm of this place never ceases to touch me, the ever-changing patterns on the lake, the play of light on clouds and rock and forest. We have, as usual, been in need of added grace and patience with each other, as weariness sets in. But the grace has been given, and I cannot remember ending a summer in such good spirits, despite the fact that many are fighting with colds.

Neither can I remember a better industrial conference. A highlight in the eyes of many participants were the sessions on 'The heart of the matter', lead with depth and brio by Antoine Jaulmes and Peter Vickers, two younger business executives. These morning sessions were followed by a choice of seven different fora, and then the main meetings were in the afternoon at 5pm. I was translating for the forum on communications and the media, with 60 participants from 16 different sectors. A Russian journalist spoke of the Moscow coup of a year ago, and the courage of the people in opposing it. They had been inspired, he said, by the example of the Balts, who had stood up to Soviet might. This lead one of the Balts present to comment, 'This helps us to lose our hatred of the Russians. I'd sworn never to speak Russian again.' There was strong self-criticism of the media, and a stress on the responsibilities as well as the freedoms of the press. As one journalist commented, 'The best of us can be better, and the worst can be much better.'

This year's 'Dialogue on the preservation of creation' also took place within the framework of the Caux Industrial Conference. It concentrated on the link between ecology and the economy, and on the link between "outer pollution" and "spiritual pollution". So many people agree that a new lifestyle is needed to meet the threats to the future. But can we find a new lifestyle without a freshly forged and widely accepted philosophy of life? A group from the Crimea and the Ukraine, close to Chernobyl, helped those present to live with the daily realities facing many; and a working group from different faiths helped the participants to see new ways of looking at economic growth.

Stephane Garelli, Professor at the University of Lausanne, and the International Institute for Management Development (IMD), the largest business school in Europe, spoke of survival values for the market economy. He said, 'We have discovered that a country, or indeed a company, which does not

intelligently manage its values, its basic principles, has no chance of being competitive, and thus of surviving.' While it can take three years for a country to remedy a balance of payments deficit, Garelli noted, a country may take five to ten years to reverse a trend of technological backwardness. 'But if a country is suffering from educational problems or from a breakdown of values,' he warned, 'then you need to reckon on 20 years, that is to say a whole generation, to reverse the trend.'

The 1990s presented a double challenge, he concluded. 'Personally I am convinced,' he said, 'that we are seeing a renewal in the importance of the family cell, the only possible guide for our children through the labyrinthine complexities of a society where different systems of values co-exist. Secondly, on the level of nations, there is the need for a solid, recognized and respected system of values. This will be seen more and more as an absolute priority: and I stress a priority and not a luxury. A market economy will die in its infancy if it is not grounded in strong values.'

We heard evidence of the spirit of MRA at work in major industries. Chandreshwar Khan, the Assistant Manager of the TELCO Management Training Centre said in a presentation of 'The Jamshedpur experience' that more than 16'000 of the 23'000 employees in their firm had been through their in-house training programme inspired by the ideas of Moral Re-Armament. TELCO is part of the vast Tata family of companies; their company had been the first to send industrial delegations to attend training courses at the MRA centre in Panchgani. Since 1982, 628 courses had taken place. 'We have created a culture of mutual trust and respect,' Mr Khan went on. There were now 1'255 voluntary 'small groups' in the company, including some 13'000 workers. 'Their quality of life has improved, and the quality of work has improved with it,' he said. Simple phrases like "I made a mistake", "You did a good job", "Thank you" and "Sorry" were changing the culture of the firm.

'We have given too much weight to work,' said Mr Terunori Aiga, Senior Vice-President of the Toshiba Corporation, a conglomerate of 200 companies, with 160'000 employees world-wide, who was one of a six-strong delegation of managers and trade unionists from Toshiba. 80 Toshiba employees have taken part in these conferences over the last 15 years. 'Mountain House has contributed a great deal to good management-worker relations in Toshiba,' Mr Aiga continued. 'We learnt from Frank Buchman the idea of seeking "not who is right, but what is right".' Toshiba was taking up the challenge of the Japanese government to reduce working hours, he said. 'We must shift the emphasis towards the family and society and away from just work,' he went on.

Russia was like a large strong adult, trained as a runner, who had now been thrown in the deep end of a pool called the market economy, and told to swim, a professor from Siberia said. Nine out of ten adults who don't know how to swim sink when thrown in, he warned. Prof. Vladimir Suprun, from the Russian Academy of Science's Institute of Philosophy and Law in Novosibirsk said, 'It would be immoral if you stood by and cheerfully watched us drown.' A year ago he had heard news of the coup in Moscow, and it brought back 'childhood memories of columns of prisoners and dogs barking'. He evoked his fear of being buried again 'under the ice of silence'. The Soviet Empire had collapsed not because of its economic failures, the professor went on, but because 'our world view, based on ideological values and a materialist philosophy that ignored the spiritual crashed'. He continued, 'Much now depends on the individual decisions of human beings,' based on cultural values that were still present, hidden under the receding ice-cap of communism.

It was quite dark as I started this letter. The year is advancing, and longer nights are coming. But now the dawn is starting a pink blush across the

sky. Later this morning we will continue our 'evaluation and conclusions', an attempt to discern and share where God's spirit has been at work in us, in others, and in situations through this summer, and to see where the same spirit leads us forward. We need a gift of prophecy, but failing that, it helps to see what happens here through the eyes of others. 'Whatever you do, don't lose the unpredictability of this place, it's astounding,' said a senior American on leaving. He had been struck by the possibilities for the un-planned, unstructured contact, the unexpected meeting of hearts and experiences. One of the senior business men here for the Round Table told his colleagues at the opening dinner, 'This is a special place. We don't need yet another international meeting, but this one, with its spiritual input, we do need.'

A highlight of our evaluating time was to hear one of our Russian friends who has poured herself out translating and serving say what Caux has meant to her. She told how she had first come two years ago, 'like a tired traveller, coming to a spring in the forest where you sit quietly, and you wash your feet, and you listen'. When she had first practiced this listening, she had thought, 'All will be well. If there is such a place in the world, all will be well.' She was followed by Vendela Tyndale-Biscoe, who spent a month in Russia before the summer here. She shared a deep experience that she had had there of God's love for Russia. 'God loves Russia very much,' she said.

Through this summer, we have listened to a hurting world, to the pain of people suffering, and to anger at injustice. It has not been comfortable, but for all its beauty and the care of many for the details of life here, Caux is not meant to be comfortable. Pain is not always the prettiest of raw materials, but isn't it an ore that God can and does refine into gold?

Happy, weary but grateful greetings from Caux,

Andrew Stallybrass

A personal footnote: As a friend joked the other day, I am one of the scribes and the pharisees. Perhaps the first is my calling and the latter my character. These letters are not a duty. They are part calling, part pleasure. My thanks to all those who've written in appreciation of them. There is a team of secretaries and helpers who send them out to whom all our thanks should also go. The conferences here are one of the greatest on-going ventures and adventures in faith in our world work. There can be no full picture of what has happened this side of heaven, but I can and do try to give a very personal answer to that question 'Where do you see the spirit of God at work in us and in situations, through Caux?'