

## MOUNTAIN HOUSE • CAUX

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Monday, 19th August 1985.

Dear friends.

Such is the vigour of the flow of life and events through Caux that it is sometimes hard to cast your mind back a week - it's like swimming up a powerful river! I'm encouraged to keep swimming by the many generous letters I've received. Many of the Asians have left, and Africa has taken its place centre stage. It is a privilege and a joy to host the world here, to enjoy such variety with the passing days. Instead of a round-the-world ticket, some of us stay here, and the nations come to us.

'We often seem to be followers, not leaders,' noted Philip Ruddock, Australian M.P., and shadow spokesman for immigration. He appreciated MRA's role in creating a new public opinion, in a final Asian session that saw the many Australians to the fore. 'A whole new way of doing things,' was the comment of a French socialist M.P. drawn to Caux by MRA's experience in the field of community relations. There were new life and perspectives for young as well as old - a teenager said, 'I've always had a sister and parents, but now I have three new friends, thanks to their honesty.'

One Asian commented on what it had meant to him to share a room with a European who shared guidance with him daily. The experience had helped him to really care for other countries, he said. A Japanese mother told of an apology to her husband that she found so difficult that she had preferred to turn out the light and do it in the dark. And other Japanese spoke with surprising frankness: a lady told of ten suicide attempts before a doctor told her, 'You've got to stop committing suicide and wait until God calls you to heaven.' She had thought, 'If I have to live, I might as well live for others,' and had gone into care for the handicapped. A senior businessman had been trained at the end of the war as a human torpedo, and described his existence since then as 'a bonus life'. 'I've been hibernating,' he said, 'but now my heart and mind have come alive.' One of the Lebanese concluded, 'We came here to find hope, with our friends. We find here peace in our hearts. We need enough time to listen to God, and let Him work in our lives.'

Throughout the week there was the bridge between the intimate and the global - and also between the right ideas and the right practical application. One of the smallest people in the assembly was a young Thai lady, who had taken on the toughest of assignments, which she described to the conference through impressive slides. She had not only trained Thai army personnel in fencing and driving, but she had also headed up a resettlement project that has benefited thousands.

A variety evening gave us the delicate grace of a Lao dance, the colour and traditions of Japan, a visual explanation of the development of China's ideograms - and a rock group including some heavily disguised friends with a song called 'Regeneration'. Alistair Miles' wig slowly slid forward to completely hide his face!

A group of Pakistani ladies from Geneva came up and cooked a delicious dessert for the conference, and were joined by their ambassador, who had informal contacts with some of the Indians present. To his amazement, he met the Uruguayan ambassador, and a recently retired Swiss diplomat who had all served together in New Delhi, and had become friends there.

The Africans arrived with customary song and dance - and Pierre Spoerri spoke for many of us when he expressed his jealousy at not being able to start a meeting in the same style. 16 African countries are represented, and we are tempted to think that the family conference has started again. There seem to be armies of children and young people in the house - including a group of 11 young blacks from Brixton in London, who all seem to have joined the chorus. 'We are the people who are on the move,' they sang, 'going home, on our way to heaven,' against the background of a giant 12-foot cut-out of the continent.

They painted a sombre picture. 'The man-made disasters are more devastating than the natural ones,' said one. Realism, yes, but abundant freshness, honesty and life too. At the urging of a lady from Soweto, we all got up and 'dropped our dignities', learning to sing and to move, and perhaps learning too to let our hearts speak, and to let our words speak for our hearts. A Tanzanian bishop told how he had quarrelled with his wife over the age of the next-door neighbour's children. Unable to sleep, he had woken his wife up in the middle of the night, to apologise twice - once for waking her, and the second time for refusing to admit that she was right. Archie Mackenzie noted, 'The deepest blocks to progress lie in the human heart. We are all under-developed in relation to what God wants us to be. And all our countries are under-developed in relation to what God wants them to be.'

Yesterday we celebrated Oscar Huebscher's 90th birthday - one of the many Swiss whose work and sacrifice makes Caux possible; and Bjorn Ole Austad from Norway and Josephine Buhagiar from Malta announced their engagement. The day also saw our local Protestant minister from Montreux joined for the church service by a multi-racial phallanx of 9 officiants, including 2 bishops - so our souls are well cared for!

Andrew Stallybrass