

# REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

## Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE  
RUE DU PANORAMA  
CH-1824 CAUX

PRIVATE

5th August, 1991

Dear friends,

Another week, another Monday. Another spell in front of a blank screen, as the sky lightens, and as a flood of impressions rush through my mind. The bare bones are easy: we reached the end of the Women's Initiative, celebrated Swiss national day, and went on to the start of the session 'created by young people for all generations'. And we've seen the numbers drop from the mind-boggling near-700 mark, to a more reasonable, still full, 500 plus.

I know it is the cowards way out, and I know that I cannot leave it at that, but I am tempted to say that we need time to evaluate the 'Creators of Peace' session, that there will be a separate conference report, and also the lead story in the next issue of 'For a Change'. Yet I am bound to try to say more. I arrived back from the mountain camp halfway through some earthquake-of-the-spirit experience, something very special, really out of the ordinarily extraordinary of Caux. One of the organizers of the industrial sessions said to me with a certain awe that he'd never seen a conference so well organized and prepared (and the industrial sessions aren't exactly under-prepared as a rule).

But that may give an idea of control, which would be quite false. There was, I think, that rare quality of doing all the preparation work that could humanly be done, and then trusting fully to God, and enjoying the freedom of the spirit. We were all gloriously out of our depth, and so perhaps adequately reliant on divine inspiration. And the "we" at the heart of it were a united, dynamic, hard-working team of friends-more-than-colleagues, an inspired amalgam of youth, experience, enthusiasm, wisdom and care for individuals.

I missed Mrs Museveni from Uganda, wife of the President, speaking. I was down in Geneva with the Caux Scholars, where we were royally received for over an hour by the head of the Red Cross, the American ambassador, and by two of the senior men in the United Nations. But just before Mrs Museveni's departure, I was eating with three of the young black BTA group from Atlanta. They all leapt to their feet, and rushed to say goodbye, and were embraced by her: an example of the unexpected links that are created here. 'I will remember this time all my life,' she said in the front hall as she left, surrounded by a chorus of women. We saw the première of a new African play 'Orezi' meaning 'choices', vivid scenes interwoven with haunting African music, depicting an African woman's path through life, and her experience of the Cross and liberation from self. Together we sang 'Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me'.

And alongside Africa, Asia and the Americas, there has been a strong and continuing East and Central European presence. A highlight was a meeting where all the speakers spoke in Russian (see the enclosed press story for a gold nugget). 90 Russians have so far been in Caux this summer, 41 together at this time. I mentioned in my last letter the photo and icon display. It has drawn me back several times during the week: it had a feeding quality, feeding something in the soul. And I remembered the Russians last year in Caux, their humiliation in feeling that they came almost as beggars, that they had nothing to give, and then their conviction that they did have a wealth of culture to offer. They have indeed offered it. We heard a recital from a Russian operatic singer, we've seen the Moscow Art Theatre group playing in the theatre again, watched a children's dance group. There have been seminars on the Orthodox Church and the new freer press situation, the new publications. There is also a

continuing flow of Poles and Romanians. 'We find here a challenge to reach for the best, and a satisfaction in the reaching,' said one Pole. Another, a key person in the birth of the Solidarity movement, talked of the open-hearted care she had found here, along with a lack of distance between people that was quite new in her experience. We have said farewell to the Chinese group who have gone on to Britain and a busy programme there. They left as real friends, presenting a beautiful painting/scroll. Amazingly, a Chinese-speaking Belgian friend had the conviction to come at this time, without knowing that her services as a translator would be of such vital use, wrestling to get the thinking of Caux into another language and culture.

The 1st of August, Swiss national day, the 700th birthday, dawned grey and damp. We were woken up at an unearthly hour by a brass band. Then we congregated on the terrace before breakfast to sing the national anthem as the flag was raised. The dining room was decorated with the flags of all the cantons, and Swiss in national costume helped to serve breakfast. A fine 50-minute documentary film led us into an original meeting, with an international panel of unprepared 'victims' who were interrogated on their views of Switzerland. 'If you had to represent Switzerland as an animal or a plant, which plant or animal would you choose?' 'The bee - they work so hard, produce honey, and can sting if needed!'

On the 2nd, all those in Caux were offered a picnic supper, and free trains to Montreux, for another celebration. All the villages around Montreux produced floats, and paraded through the streets, before a grandiose chin-dropping and gasp-producing firework display. The Caux float, a turn-of-the-century scene of knitting, sewing, embroidering, with period costumes and tools and implements, won second prize (and deserved first place!). The happy and friendly teamwork with the village is a subject for gratitude. We are blessed with good neighbours. So, many of us came back on the 12.30 or 1am trains; the streets of Montreux seemed full of conference participants. After all, it's only once in a hundred years you get a free train ride in Switzerland!

A superb afternoon classical concert by Jonathan and Elisabeth Sparey, Sylvie Söderlund and Kathleen Dodds left me dreaming of a week's session without words - just music, mime, dance, the arts, to change and transform and uplift people's souls. But we are now into a new session, not without words, but conceived with great freshness and originality. Yesterday, a bar-side series of interviews in the morning meeting gave us an excellent introduction to MRA. An old Beatles song, 'Nowhere man' gave us the challenge: 'doesn't have a point of view, knows not where he's going to, isn't he a bit like you and me?' Today, and for the rest of the week, we meet at 8 for a brief introduction to a theme, before being given a series of questions and being sent off for 45 minutes quiet reflection before a 9 o'clock breakfast, followed later in the morning by discussion and sharing in small groups that are invading every corner of the house (including the landing outside our bedroom). The organizing committee felt that nothing was more central to the experience of Caux than an introduction to silence in the presence of God.

Yesterday's sermon in church was about meals and food, and the importance of the fellowship that can be created round a table. The minister ended with a thought and a prayer for those in the kitchen in Mountain House and all those running the conferences. This understanding and support is another reason for gratitude. Certainly, as we look to the sessions, the days and weeks ahead, we feel in need of prayer, for continuing freshness and inspiration.

Grateful greetings from,

Andrew Stallybrass