

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Monday, 17th July 1989

Dear Friends,

Summer is back in all its glory, with the dawn light painting the mountains pink and the horizon pale green. It is a good year for the wild strawberries, and there will be many raspberries later for the afternoon walkers on the paths around Caux. My friends the orchids on the Sonchaud road are fading, and time marches on, but its hard, very hard, to believe that the conference has been running for only a bit over a week.

We enclose a copy of the press story which went out at the beginning of the Franco-American session, with President Bush's message. It went out at two pm, and at four pm it was the lead item on the Swiss radio news, with a little addition at the end, to the effect that perhaps one day European heads of state would send similar messages to Caux!

One of the Americans spoke at the same opening of the intertwined history of France and the United States. They had often been united against a common foe, but it was more important today to be united in great goals. A paper guillotine was brought up onto the platform, and as the children gave ideas about the weaknesses that stand in the way of democracy, they were written on pieces of paper, and decapitated under the knife. Gershwin's music provided an introduction and an interlude.

Then Mayor Jim Mullen of Pennsburg, Pennsylvania spoke and read the Bush message. It had been brought to them by hand, by aides to their congressman, and had arrived only half an hour before the group had left for Caux! The next day, David Bausch, the Chief Executive of Lehigh County, in which Allentown Frank Buchman's home lies, presented to Caux a bust of Buchman by the Minnesotan artist Paul Granlund.

Philip Tyndale-Biscoe's new play 'Let's talk turkey' received an enthusiastic response at its Caux premiere. If laughter is indeed the shout of recognition with which we recognise ourselves, there were many couples who saw themselves on stage. One of the audience even remarked on the number of people in the theatre who were watching each others' reactions rather than the stage! But beyond the humour there were some

magic moments of silence, stillness, and wholly credible honesty.

The whole conference celebrated the 14th July, Bastille Day, with the French. There were red, white and blue flowers on the tables for breakfast, coloured napkins for supper. Michel Sentis talked with great humour about their own family's move from absolute monarchy and benevolent dictatorship to democracy. We then all moved outside to plant a 'liberty tree', a symbol dating from the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. French, Americans and Swiss joined in placing an American oak on the corner of the Mountain House entrance and the road down to Montreux.

One of the Lebanese Muslims spoke on the theme of brotherhood. 'Only an inner spiritual change can immunise you against hate and blame,' he said. The conflict was not between Islam and Christianity, but between Muslims and Christians. 'Peace is not only the absence of war; love is not only the absence of hate,' he went on. Here he had experienced a brotherhood with the whole world. He wanted to reach out to his Christian brothers and sisters, including the Lebanese soon to arrive. 'It is difficult to feel love and brotherhood when you're pushed to the limits,' he concluded. 'We feel that we are treated as second-class citizens of the world; the West does not treat us as equals.'

Then there's been gypsy music over coffee in the great hall, the local brass band giving a concert at the railway station (the alternative venue in case of rain), French and American folk music and humour, two pre-breakfast times of music, readings, silence and prayer.

The accommodation team is starting to worry how we are going to house the hordes descending on us at the end of the month: the count is now over 470, without including any Poles, and there may be as many as sixty. We are torn between gratitude for all the people coming, brought by a sense of need from so many areas of conflict and change, and the fear that we won't be able to look after them all properly.

Yesterday was the first of the summer's two open days, advertised in the papers of the region. The whole conference joined in helping to receive the steady trickle of visitors all through the day, manning different information points around the house or acting as guides to groups. Some 150 of our neighbours took advantage of the offer. Perhaps this is start of another Caux tradition?

Yours ever,

Andrew Stallybrass