

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, 24th July 1989

Dear Friends,

I must start with a confession. I've been unwell, and my view of Caux for the last week has been reduced to the four walls of my room, and some fugitive appearances at tea and meals, but not sufficient to give you an adequate picture of the seven days just past. Yet with the help of a few friends, I'll do my best. There's been a considerable turnover of people, and the numbers, already past the three hundred mark, are hurrying on to four hundred and beyond. We expect by the end of the week to have 40 Lebanese with us, and our prayers have been winging their way as they seek to get out of Beirut in between the bombardments. The main party arrived safely yesterday.

It hasn't been a family conference, but there have been a host of families, including a considerable and distinctive American contingent, so Caux has been enlivened with noisy games and boistrous helpers in the kitchen and at the wash-up. I watched with fascination a deep talk between a little boy who spoke only Chinese and another pint-sized friend speaking only English; both seemed to understand the other perfectly - or perhaps was just entirely at peace understanding nothing! A multi-lingual children's cast put on a play by Randy Ruffin about Joan of Arc for everybody one evening. Kids from Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, USA, UK, Taiwan and France took part, after one week's rehearsal, all in costume.

There has also been time to go into some of our preoccupations as a world force: we've had an evening for the whole conference on our publications (Changer, Caux Information and For a Change), with the editors present. We have also had more private sessions on the planned meetings in Japan in the autumn, and the right European participation, and on the future of Caux, its use and needs.

Willard Hunter gave a remarkable talk on the origins of Alcoholics Anonymous, which helped us better to appreciate this off-shoot of the Oxford Group, which still today insists on very real and practical steps of change, and which is reaching out into the communist world. Several young people shared new decisions in a meeting on 'As I will be, so will be my nation'.

Over two days, there were discussion groups on life-changing. In one group, they washed each others' feet, as a reminder that changing lives starts with selfless service of others, and vulnerability. What helps others most is honesty about our struggle now, not experiences from the dim and distant past.

Before we move on into the Mediterranean session, we are spending a few days on the theme of Europe. At a memorable afternoon session, a Russian philosopher and his wife spoke about their country and its future, and about their faith. Brought up in atheist families, in a state that has done its best to stamp out faith, they have both become lively Christians. To hear him answering a Roumanian and then a Pole, trying to salve wounds, was to realise that a new chapter is opening up in the history of Caux.

In a morning session on East and West Europe, the philosopher noted, 'After so many years of dictatorship and an imposed ideology, we suffer from many wounds, but the deepest is the loss of our soul. In our country today, all are in search of their soul.' How does one become a Christian after so many years of atheist dictatorship, he asked. He went on, 'Perhaps this dictatorship can be a gift from God: He can be more easily rediscovered here than in the religious ambiguity of the consumer society.' He concluded that the two parts of Europe are deeply searching, and in need of each other.

While we are all here in Caux, a small team is at work in Paris where an international conference on the future of Cambodia is being held. In the Boulogne home, Alain and Anne-Marie Tate, helped by Alan Griffith, Steve Dickinson and others are in touch with many of the participants. The house has already twice been used for meetings between Khmers from different resistance groups. Thanks to Alain and Daniel Dommel, links have been renewed between Soubert Son and Rainsy Sam, both of them friends of MRA, but belonging to different camps.

All in the house will be furnishing a major effort over the next ten days as we reach the climax of the summer. All will be stretched, yet with so many coming from such situations of pain and need, what a joyous stretch it will be. But we do ask for your support in prayer, that beyond all the best care and effort and thought that we can provide, the Holy Spirit will provide the plus that brings new life.

Yours ever,

Andrew Stallybrass