

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

TÉL. 021/9634821
TÉLÉFAX 021/9635260
TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

Monday, 10th August 1992

Dear friends,

We've been having a heat wave and a dry spell. A journey down the hill was an involuntary trip to the sauna. But after last night's 40th anniversary re-release of the ever-green film of Jotham Valley, an MRA musical based on a true story set in Nevada, USA, about a water dispute in a farming area in the midst of drought, and the reconciliation between two brothers, the storm lights have been flashing round the lake, and we've had some cooling rain. After the film, two people commented that it had helped them to see things that they needed to put right. As I write, it is pouring outside. The last rain (unforecast) came a week ago while I was away, trying to bivouac out with my godson. We enjoyed the most memorably uncomfortable night of our lives sheltering under a boulder through a thunder storm, and learning that even massive boulders can leak a good deal of water.

Is it the drought or the turning of the year? The first leaves are falling and clattering round the terrace in the gusts of wind. The raspberries and wild mountain strawberries are ready for eating but rare - as is the time to search them out! The house has been full, and is getting fuller, overflowing the village and now down to Glion, and indeed, my earlier forecasts have proved quite spectacularly wrong: we will be full and over through the coming 'regions in crisis and recovery' session, and the industry session, until the final few days. Sadly some of the many late signers-on have had to be turned away.

The amazing mix of countries and languages continues: the education session drew many from Eastern and Central Europe. A technical school teacher from Moscow noted that 'striving for comfort has become something of a European religion'. What could those in education do to wipe out the monstrous crimes of the past, he asked. Real freedom, he went on, involved following God's principles, and being fully obedient to God's will, and in Russia, there was a real renaissance of religious awareness. 'MRA means no more nor less than the return to religion for our country,' he concluded. We have got used to listening to Russian and Polish spoken from the platform, and translated over the earphones. The session was not one of technical discussions, but of searching out personal motivations, and exchanging experiences of faith at work.

And indeed, in parallel with the education session, translation to and from Russian has also been under way elsewhere in the house, for a seminar in the Panorama room at the end of the promenoir. 16 philosophers and intellectuals from Russia, and 11 senior academics from Ukraine, Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Western Europe and the US, some 40 in all, including support staff, have been meeting. Bryan Hamlin, one of the organizers writes: 'The 5-day symposium on "The moral lessons of Soviet history - the experience of opposition to evil" heard 8 major papers, 7 of them from Russians. Those involved were mostly philosophers and historians, but they included the chief editor of Moscow News and people with access to both Yeltsin and Gorbachev. The discussion was by design academic, but the organizers, Iury and Lena Senokosov, also encouraged interaction with the others in Caux, the sharing of personal experience and 'confessional moments' that somewhat embarrassed some of the Western academics - all very healthy. Seeds have been sown, and we must cherish their growth.'

Three Orthodox singers from the Crimea gave a taste of another world, singing for the seminar, and then for a main meeting, and a meditative, prayerful concert in the Catholic chapel. Our continent, and our work of MRA across it, is becoming whole. We are coming together with part of ourselves and our history, and we have not known what we were missing. One evening, the British violinist Jonathan Sparey, with his wife Elisabeth, and Sylvie Söderlund accompanied by Kathleen Dodds gave the translators a break and took us on a superb musical journey around this expanding Europe.

But the rest of the world has been present too. One meeting, led by two Africans, had 18 on the platform from Africa, Asia and the Pacific. We learnt that the Aborigines of Australia have a special word for the whites which translates as 'the paper-talk people'. Several commented on the value of the meetings in smaller 'communities', with their work shifts. 'We were from 14 different nationalities,' commented one surprised teacher. He left having decided that he should spend more time with his family, and be more responsible for what happened at home. He described relations there as being 'usually peaceful coexistence rather than full responsibility'. A Lebanese couple also talked of spending more time with their children, and taking the time to listen. There were two reconciliations in the family that they now needed to work for. An English house-master in a private school said that he'd thought himself very busy but succesful. Here, he had seen that he always had time to talk to the pupils, but not to listen to them. He wanted to take back home with him this idea of taking the time to listen to others.

Latvians and Russians from the Baltic states spoke together. 'The Devil and God are still acting very energetically in our country,' said a Russian, who had been told before coming that Caux was a house where hearts are open. He'd learnt that it was also a house 'where the walls are broken and bridges are built' between Poles, Ukrainians, Russians, Czecks, Latvians, Lithuanians, and he was grateful for that. But a Pole added, 'We don't just meet our neighbours here, we meet the world.' Another Russian concluded, 'Caux has given me the energy and the strength to share my faith.'

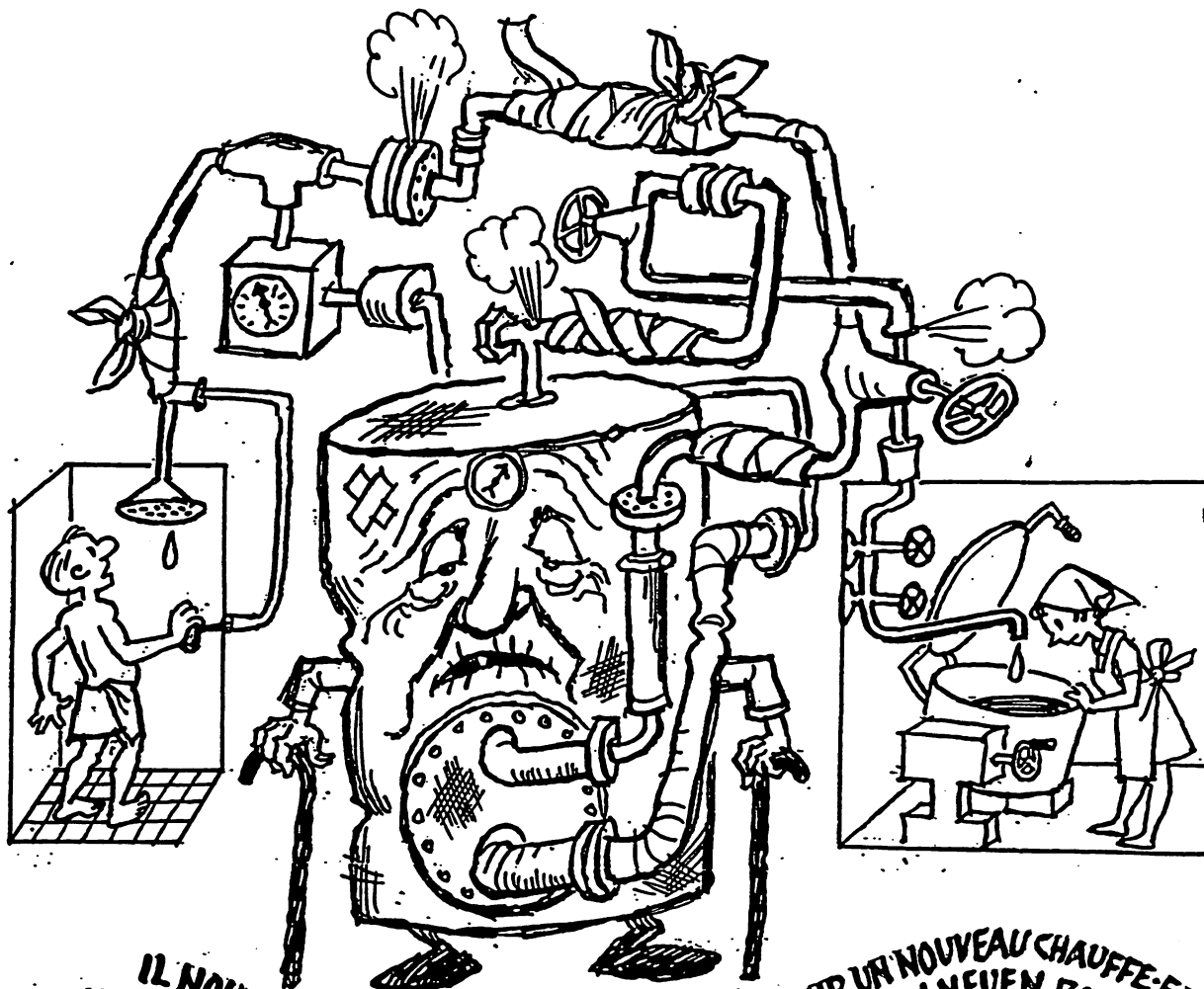
The Grace family from Britain lead a lively variety event on the last evening. One of the daughters played a piece on the violin, her own composition, written after a fight with her father, and the evening ended with a song she had composed about her own search for faith: 'I want to see you, hear you, know you.' There was a Mohawk dance from Canada, a Japanese song that included some junior recruits from America, African song and dance,, music from Moravia and Poland...

There have been daily 'day-breaker' meetings before breakfast, to lead us into silence. I wanted to end with a Celtic prayer that Joan Holland read to us the other day. It sums up how I want to live in the press and stress of Caux:

I weave a silence onto my lips,
I weave a silence into my mind,
I weave a silence within my heart.
I close my ears to distractions,
I close my eyes to attractions,
I close my heart to temptations.
Calm me O Lord as you stilled the storm,
Still me O Lord, keep me from harm.
Let all tumult within me cease,
Enfold me Lord in your peace.

Greetings from a storm-lashed Caux,

Andrew Stallybrass



IL NOUS FAUT
 WIR BRAUCHEN
 WE ARE RAISING **Fr 150 000** POUR UN NOUVEAU CHAUFFE-EAU
 FÜR EINEN NEUEN BOILER
 FOR A NEW BOILER



A giant version of this cartoon has now gone up in the third floor corridor in Caux, in the place of a presentation of the need to replace the tiles on the roof.