

MOUNTAIN HOUSE · CAUX

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

NEWSLETTER 4

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Dear friends,

Summer has gone by without our noticing it, we are half-way through the conference, the leaves are giving the first hints of turning and the chill of autumn is upon us. Perhaps it'll be a hot and sunny autumn, say I wistfully! I can't remember ever having such a cold and wet July, with the central heating on in the house. But at least the roses seem to thrive on the strange seasons, and are superb.

On Saturday we celebrated the Swiss national day with the traditional festivities - a folk-music and dancing group from the Valais in splendid costumes, and grilled sausages and sack races for the children on the 'rond point' in the bend of the road above the front door. And the village celebrations were enlivened and 'exoticified' by a song, dancing and drumming from a group of young Nigerians attending the conference. As the light faded, under the clearing clouds, fires winked out down the lake shore and up the valley of the Rhone, and fireworks detonated in showers of colours.

'You don't celebrate a birthday alone, and we are glad to include the whole world,' said Ueli Gautschi, a senior manager with Swissair, in a lively 'meet with the Swiss' session. Gratitude was expressed by many, but also a searching for God's vision of the reality and destiny of this country. 'Materialism is pushing the Cross to one side,' Ueli added, touching on the banking secrecy that can even creep into the home! His wife, Margarete, spoke of being trained to serve as a hostess on Swissair. 'Here in Caux,' she added, 'I have learnt a deeper meaning to service, to serve under God's guidance.'

This week has seen a series of short sessions at 9.30 on such themes as 'difficult people' and 'faith and hope' followed by coffee served in the great hall - the innovations continue, and this one was much appreciated, not least by the Dutch. Then we have had a further 'meet with...' session. One day it was the Nigerians; on another it was a senior couple from Cameroun. Lucie Perrenoud was interviewed, to draw out some of the details of the amazing and miraculous beginnings of Caux, and the on-going adventures of a life given to God.

There has been a freshness and depth in all the meetings that has touched old and new. A young German mother spoke movingly on the theme of forgiveness, referring to the difficult relationship with her

parents. She had just found a new freedom in the experience of God's love for her. Without this, she had felt her relationship with her own parents poisoning her relationship with her own children. 'Unless I forgive, God can't get anything new into me,' she said.

A Polish exile, who'd spent time in prison in Poland as an underground organiser for Solidarity, spoke of the power of the state that wants to decide everything for everyone. 'But that power never dominated my life, despite 5 years in prison,' he said. 'Others decided when I should get up and when I should sleep, but they couldn't decide who I was or what I thought, and I always felt that I was a free man.' We can never get beyond God's power, he concluded.

An East European professor said, 'Life will be less comfortable after Caux.' After a long academic career, and some political experience, he'd thought that he had reached certain definitive conclusions. But coming to Caux and meeting the ideology of Moral Re-Armament had forced him to review his whole thinking.

This afternoon the American-hosted session opens, doubtless with a bang! Numbers are again climbing up over the three hundred mark, and will most likely stay that way till near the end, but it's clear that overall, we will be far fewer than last year. It allows a more relaxed atmosphere, and more time for people, with less stress and rush. And there has been a continuing sense of God's spirit at work in people's lives.

It is a cliché, yet true no less, that Caux is a great unifier and forum for our team. Quieter spells like this give us added chance to cement the precious links of our world fellowship, to renew and refresh our friendships, and learn from each other. For instance, eight or nine of the younger Europeans who have taken on the Latin American continent are here, for the first time all together, and have been able to meet unhurriedly. There is also the welcome chance to get my letter onto one sheet of paper!

With warm greetings from Caux,

Andrew Stallybrass