

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE D'U PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

Monday, 16th August 1993

Dear friends,

It is now the rearguard of the night that greets me as I rise, and not the first scouts of the dawn. The year is moving on, the days are shortening, and that magic autumn clarity and coolness is in the air - in between memorable thunder storms and downpours! Should I re-think my weekly schedule, my Monday mornings, I ask myself? Each letter seems to fall on the junction between two sessions, or a gap, but then none of the sessions this year neatly lasts one week. So this week has seen the end of the 'Regions session', and last night brought us the opening of the 'Caux industrial forums'. Another change of faces and styles (more suits and ties), and another lap nearer the finishing line.

Last Monday, after an earlier than usual meeting, the conference was invited to head for the hills and a picnic, and again, we were blessed by a fine day framed by rainy days. We walked with a Russian, Swedish, Nigerian, Romanian group up a "bisse" irrigation canal to a glacier, a day of symbols of nature's power and grandeur, and man's ingenuity to take the precious, life-giving water to the places it's most needed.

There's the magic of the planned, and the magic of the unplanned. So much of what goes on here is known only to one or two people, and to God, and he alone can see where all the threads of life can lead. A Cabinet Minister from the Eastern Mediterranean was asked as he left if he had found hope. 'No,' he replied, 'but I've found courage, and if I act on that, I may find hope.' Somalians from three clans met daily with friends to seek for ways to help their ravaged country find healing.

This week has seen the end of the Caux Scholars Program, and a lively, emotional evening of presentations of certificates and speeches. My feeling is that this has been the best year yet. Several of the scholars were leading communities during this last session.

The week has also seen the death of two friends long connected to the life of Caux. Charlie Rudolph gave up a promising architectural practice to give his services here, over many years, and to mark the present with his imagination and generosity (for example, the translation cabins in the Great Hall were of his conception). Gerd Jonzon was here last summer, as usual, working on the accommodation team. She died

on Saturday, with the words of Dame Julian of Norwich on her lips: 'All shall be well.' Many of us thought of her and Bror yesterday in the Caux chapel that Bror has so loved, and where he has taken so many services, and where the large window reminds us of Jacob's dream, and the ladder linking heaven and earth, and the angels coming and going.

There was a small short concert and ceremony to welcome a piano (yes, no typing error): Muriel Smith's piano has found a home here in the theatre foyer. The star of 'The Crowning Experience', who gave so much to the world and to MRA through her music, gives on. A young African American cellist played a spiritual, "No more weepin' and wailin', just going back home with God", with great verve, and spoke with emotion of 'her role model'. Then we moved into the theatre for another magic moment with American actor Tom Stolz, and his dramatized recitation of Saint Mark's Gospel, in the King James version. 'How can he carry it off?' I hear you ask, and I asked myself, but he did, despite the thundering of rain on the roof. Which of the Christians among us has ever read a gospel at one sitting? It is a fascinating experience. I was struck by the number of times the words 'straightway' or 'immediately' came up. Also the way that Jesus could never get away from the crowds, yet his compassion for them.

'Caux is a school on the scale of the world,' said a Lebanese friend, 'where we all teach and we all learn. I've learnt to be simple - and that's not simple!' He spoke of the need for a daily dialogue between Muslims and Christians rooted in simplicity rather than philosophy. A black American woman spoke with deep emotion about a white family who had shown her love and friendship and respect. It was the first time that a white man had ever stood to offer her a chair. One of the Chinese delegation spoke of 'finding the common ground', and of 'Caux making the earth smaller'. 'MRA is not an extra burden, but a breath of fresh air in all my activities,' said a senior African woman. 'I'd gathered a lot of dust. This has been a time of self-examination,' she went on, 'I can't wait to get home to put right a host of things.' A Czech said, 'I thought I was good, but there was something that I couldn't forgive. Here I have found forgiveness, and I am very free.' The Romanian group received King Michael and Queen Anne (there was considerable emotion on both sides).

The 'Regions session' ended with a rich variety evening in the Great Hall, 'a world-wide telecast, with your eyes as cameras, and the satellite transmission being yourselves'. An early-autumn sun streamed into the bay window. The Chinese delegation sang together with those from Taiwan and Hong Kong. A young Russian woman, a couple from the Ukraine, a Swiss yodel, a French boy on the trumpet... and finally a remarkable improvisation on 'the progression of African-American music' on cello, drums, electric lead and bass guitars and piano.

Weary but cheerful greetings from here,

Andrew Stallybrass