

## MARRIAGE CELEBRATIONS TEN YEARS ON

Last month the tenth Visiting Course (VC) took place. It was held in West Ukraine, and attended by 18 people including the faculty – Ulli Raab from Germany, Luc and Karina Alderliesten-Bethgel from Holland, and myself.

This course was initiated by a L'viv University student who had attended a VC in 1994. When she went home, her family were startled by the change in her. 'She was kind and thoughtful,' her sister remembers. 'We noticed that she had more courage, tolerance and direction. She sorted things out with her boy friend. At first we were suspicious about what she had got mixed up in; but gradually the ideas of MRA became clear. My parents allowed me to attend the VC in Borinja the following year. They were amazed at the change in me when I came back. Trust grew between us.'

For last month's Course, the whole family swung into action and found the venue. On one day, they and many others joined the course for a barbecue. One parent returned home and urged the local TV and radio to interview participants, which they did. Both radio and TV intend to broadcast 30-minute feature programmes to their audience of 150,000 people.

While in West Ukraine, we visited others who had participated in the 1994 VC. One was a teacher in her early 30s. 'Before the VC I considered divorce many times,' she said. 'My husband and I constantly blamed each other. There were silences that could last a month or two. Our son suffered. I could not see a way forward. During the course, we spent a full day considering the four absolute moral standards. Suddenly I began to see the gap between my own behaviour and absolute love.'

'When I got home, I apologised to my son for being unloving, for the hard words and cuffs. He was so surprised and excited. We were both in tears and he forgave me immediately.'

'I spoke to my husband. He said, "This is the first time you have spoken to me without criticising me." In the following weeks, a string of jobs around the house were quietly done. Some had waited five years.'

'At school my colleagues were intrigued and a bit suspicious. But relationships and standards in all my classes began to improve, and colleagues came to sit in on my lessons to see how I did things. The change in my home life interested other teachers, who admitted to have similar problems.'

'Some months after the VC, I began to attend church regularly. Soon my son joined me. My husband is still without belief, but, to support me and my son, he agreed to be married in church. This event took place ten years after the civil ceremony.'

*Erik Andren*

## REACHING ACROSS THE RHINE

When Peter died suddenly in June, he had just finished a book about Germany. He felt strongly the need to appreciate Germany's historical position and to give it support rather than isolate it and force it to 'go it alone'. His book will be published in October and launched at an occasion in the Clinendael Institute of Foreign Studies in the Hague at which his friend, E.U. Commissioner Hans van den Broek, will speak.

Peter's growing conviction was that what mattered most in life was to be a friend to people and to serve each other. The experience of his death, its timing and other details, confirmed for me that one can trust God under all circumstances.

*Digna Hintzen*

## TRAVELLING IN BETTER SHAPE?

New energies and shared visions have emerged during the Caux Jubilee celebrations. Now we can look ahead with **fresh confidence in our message** and certainty in our calling. And at the close of my time with the international Coordination Group may I share some personal reflections?

It has been a rare privilege to come to understand some of the hopes of my colleagues in different parts of the world. It has also been painful to live into some situations; especially when what appeared

to be a workable solution has not worked out. If one looks at bottlenecks in our work, there are usually **complicated relationships** involved.

We could all benefit from a new maturity that enables us to claim the **grace and generosity**, and the good humour, which make it possible to work with everyone. Touchiness is one of the curses we live with. We are often prickly — swift to react personally to any suggestion from others which implies a need for change, however modest, on our part. Is it because our project, even our empire, is threatened? In some measure, these defence mechanisms in us relate to past experiences of **inappropriate censure**. We can cope objectively with a professional, such as a physician or a teacher, pointing out how we can be or can do better. But not so often a colleague. Perhaps we see it as judgement rather than insight. And we do sometimes confuse the two.

So I would plead for a balance that is based on a greater love for one another and a deeper understanding of how much we need each other in our common task. **'Honour one another before yourselves,'** Paul wrote.

This difficulty is also related to **our concept of leadership**. Again, as Paul wrote to the Romans, 'We have different gifts according to the grace given us; . . . if it is leadership let him govern diligently . . .'. I would like to see greater encouragement shown to colleagues who are willing, and have the capacity, to give leadership — a leadership which is inclusive, accountable and above all builds a team. Any jealousy, judgement or dog-in-the-manger attitude hinders this. In service to God we accept His authority. We find it a great deal harder to respect the 'authority' represented in the convictions of another. Some of us value more highly and without self-questioning our own opinions and ways of doing things and so we cease to grow.

The **Cyprus Consultation Report** [1993] states: 'We were of one mind that MRA today requires clearer and bolder collective leadership. We were not thinking of "Leaders" whom we might ask to "take charge", nor of any new structure, but rather a new quality of decisiveness and initiative throughout our work. Such leadership should be accountable and reflect MRA's increasing global diversity. It should be prompted from within each person, not conferred from without. . . . In the MRA context, leadership entails service, not control. To be effective it must be transparent, inclusive and trustworthy.'

There are **no prizes for offering leadership** in MRA. Blame and criticism are painful hazards and something of a deterrent for most of us but the work would benefit if we were more supportive, endorsing and generous.

I guess we all wish to be **more bold and daring**; more ready to take risks. But a fear of making mistakes and being held to blame sometimes curbs initiative.

Above all, we need to live each day with such a feeling of joy and privilege in what we have experienced through our faith and commitment that those we meet say to themselves: 'What is it about that person? **I wish I had it.'**

There is more I could say before my sermon ends: Some of us take on too much and do not allow space in our day for God's unexpected event. Too few of us feel fully responsible for the financing of our world work. Keeping our hand to the plough and human activism are not the same thing. God can sometimes fill the vacuum created when our presence is removed. We need to be **all-round, whole personalities** who are never 'boring'.

*Chris Mayor, Melbourne*

#### CAUX JUBILEE

This Jubilee summer was an especially meaningful experience for all of us. We Swiss appreciated tremendously the way so many came from far and wide to contribute to this great adventure. The 'three-week' periods were so colourful and lively, each in its own way. It showed that the impossible becomes possible when we pull together!

May we express our warmest wishes for the coming months as we enter many new doors.

*The Quatuor: Christine, Anne-Katherine, Andrew, Pierre; Marcel and Theri and all Swiss friends*

#### CAUX JUBILEE CONTINUES

The 1996 Jubilee events in Caux are not yet over! They will continue at the end of the year with a session specially for families. It will start on the evening of 26 December and end on 2 January. The theme will be Healing the Past, Forging the Future, looked at from the perspective of the family. Invitations and information, in French, German and English, are available from the MRA office in The Hague, Netherlands.

*Johannes de Pous*

#### COORDINATION GROUP SURVEY

The Coordination Group has initiated a survey in which we ask people what they think are the most

promising growth points in our world work of MRA – something which is active and developing with important potential for the future. We would like to thank all those who have so far participated.

We see this survey as part of the overall assessment of our work which is going on at present, and tying in to the evaluation of Caux '96 which comes to fruition at the Consultation at Haguenau at the end of October. The replies from you so far point to patterns in our work which might prove quite instructive. Therefore, we are continuing the survey for a little longer so as to include as many as possible. Please send to Bryan Hamlin what you think are the one, two or three most significant or promising developments in our work, or which you are excited about. (40 Dana Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA. Tel + 1 617 547 0761, fax + 1 617 547 4301, E-mail: 102367.2373@compuserve.com ). **Deadline October 15**, please, so that replies can be assessed in time for the Haguenau meeting.

We will report on this in a subsequent WB. Thank you for your help.

**The Coordination Group**  
(*Annejet Campbell, Amina Dikedi, Bryan Hamlin, Suresh Khatri, Philippe Lasserre, Elsa Vogel and Jens Wilhelmsen*)

#### FOR A CHANGE FOCUSES ON CAUX 50TH

The next issue of For a Change, due late September, focuses on the Caux Jubilee. The 28-page special issue will include features on all the major sessions, plus a profile of Philippe Mottu, guest column by Graham Turner, stories of change in action around the world and masses of photos. The perfect way to tell people what happened at Caux this summer, a useful back-up to any 'single session' report, the ideal follow-up to the pictorial! Extra copies can be ordered at a reduced rate from Grosvenor Books in London.

*Mary Lean*

#### ACCEPTING NEW REALITIES

In the MRA 'culture', we often say there is no such thing as 'retirement'. A commitment to serve God and our fellow human beings lasts forever, we feel. In the Lord's Prayer we say, 'thy Kingdom come on earth'. This is surely valid for as long as we are on earth? Yes, indeed.

But is it really true to say that in MRA there should be no retirement? The years change us. Energies and capacities diminish. So we can and should

retire from responsibilities – without giving up feeling responsible.

An elderly, frail friend of mine asked my advice about whether he should come to Caux in this Jubilee Year. I told him that I had decided to 'accept' new realities. One is a diminution of energies. Another is to get out of the way of those younger than myself by resigning from the Boards of MRA legal bodies in four countries, while still being available for consultation if that would ever be useful.

Not being on MRA Councils does make a change. I had been a founding member of one 40 years ago. In most ways, this is a relief – no more meetings and Minutes. Fewer phone calls and faxes. But I can be tempted to feel unneeded, though I still seem to do quite a lot of travelling and have lots of correspondence.

I see the process not as giving up or giving in, but going on to turn a fresh page on which God will write. This may include old duties left unfinished, especially in the nurturing of friendships. And there are new opportunities for service for which you never had time previously.

*Gordon Wise*

#### A REMINDER

A reminder: 'After Caux 1996. What next steps?' – an important gathering in Haguenau, France, October 31 to November 3 (arrive Oct. 30, leave November 4) which needs the right representation, worldwide and European. Applications and/or further information: Philippe Lasserre in Paris.

#### FIFTY YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

A magnificent gold-embossed invitation announces an international conference at Asia Plateau, Maharashtra, on the fiftieth anniversary of Indian Independence. The conference will be held from 3rd to 7th January 1997. Its theme is 'Learning from the 20th Century; preparing for the 21st'. Further details are available from Jyothi Subrahmanyam, the Conference Secretary, at Asia Plateau.

### NEEDED FOR NEW WORLD ADDRESS LIST

A new world address list will be available by November 1. It will be distributed through national MRA offices or World Bulletin distributors. Could you let me have any corrections to the present one by October 15? Lotty Wolvekamp, Amaliastraat 10, 2514JC Den Haag, Holland. Fax +31 70 361 7209.

**Taiwan:** The address of the new MRA office in Taipei is 11 F-4, No 5, Tun Hua South Road, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC. Tel +886 2 708 8337 Fax +886 2 705 2827.

**Australia:** David and Jane Mills' phone number is now +61 2 9599 1428.

### FACTS ON FAXES, PHONES AND ADDRESSES

**United Kingdom:** Archie and Ruth Mackenzie now have a fax on their existing phone line: +44 1360 870 262.

## Calendar of Events

OCT '96	<u>Odawara Japan</u>	Conference	Oct 19 - 20
	<u>Sydney Australia</u>	International Communications Forum	Oct 25 - 29
	<u>Haguenau France</u>	After Caux 1996. What next steps?	Oct 30 - Nov 4
NOV '96	<u>Minnesota USA</u>	Farmers' Dialogue	Nov 14 - 17
DEC '96	<u>Caux Switzerland</u>	Healing the Past, Forging the Future – family conference	Dec 26 - Jan 2
JAN '97	<u>Asia Plateau India</u>	Learning from the 20th century, preparing for the 21st	Jan 3 - 7
APR '97	<u>Victoria Australia</u>	Global Consultation on enlistment and training	Apr 19 - 26

*The deadline for the next Bulletin is Tuesday, October 15, 1996*

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