

MOUNTAIN HOUSE · CAUX

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

NEWSLETTER 6

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Dear friends,

The Great Weather-Maker in the sky must have been reading my letters. He has at last decided to take pity on us, and we have had a week of glorious days and meals on the terrace and blue, blue skies and far views over forests that are just starting to turn. Yet I walked down to write this in the dark - the nights are lengthening again. But long may this Indian summer last - and last it seems set to do, to the delight of all, especially since today is planned as an outing/picnic/walk/free day.

This Monday morning routine doesn't always fit with the natural breaks and rhythms of the conference - for example, the last letter was finished and on its way to you as the previous Americas-hosted session was just ending, with moving decisions, the fruits of the many rich and intense discussion groups. 'I'm a little out of my comfort zone,' confessed one lady from the West Coast of the US, who had been wondering what to do with the rest of her life. 'I've always talked to God,' she said, 'but I've never listened. Here I've learnt to listen.'

'I get the best thoughts late at night on my balcony,' she went on, adding that she'd have liked to take her balcony home with her, but sadly that wasn't possible! Divorced after 25 years of marriage, she had felt that she was in a winter that was going to last for ever, but spring and healing had started to come. At the top of the Rochers de Naye she had seen hang-gliders launching out into the air, and in a dream she had seen herself conquering her fear and launching out into the void for the first time. 'If my husband and I had put as much into our spiritual life as we put into our material life, things might have been different,' she said, concluding that she felt that a new door was about to open for her. And indeed, new doors have been opening for many.

One mark of the summer has been unhurried time with people, and unhurried stays. Two Cameroun families have followed each other here, each staying for ten days or more. The first, he a senior civil servant, she the mother of a large family, expressed their conviction to be fully responsible for the moral and spiritual re-arming of their country on their return home. The second family is made up of a widow and her three young adult children. The mother told how she had always considered herself to be absolutely honest, but after a meeting on honesty, she had remembered that she had cheated on her tax form, in order to help to pay the children's fares to Caux, something she was going to have to sort out on her return!

Then on Wednesday, the next session, a dialogue of the continents under the title 'Living to give' got under way, with a multi-coloured,

multi-continent chorus, kimonos mixing with African shirts. A special guest of honour was the Sri Lankan former Secretary General of UNCTAD, an eminent economist (see the enclosed press release). The Asians and Africans and those from the Pacific are to the fore in the planning and leadership of the meetings, and we are again having two morning meetings, the first being more in the nature of 'spiritual input'. The first, on 'the other side of silence' started with Kathleen Dodds' new song of the same title, written for the Atlanta conference: 'One day I heard a call from the other side of silence,/It seemed that someone knew my name,/My life will never be the same.'

This weekend had seen a host of diplomats joining us - 13 from the Philippine embassy in Bern and mission in Geneva, including the chargé d'affaires from the Swiss capital and the ambassador to the UN, both ladies, the Sri Lankan ambassador to UNESCO in Paris, and a Tanzanian ambassador, also a woman.

One evening we had 'stories by the fireside', without the fire, and with more than stories. We started with drums and dance, but there was a series of folk songs from one of the Korean delegation, and an Xhosa poem (fortunately with translation). John Amata gathered a group of young Africans round his feet on the platform, as he told the story of Aziz the wrestler, who 'learnt wisdom as well as prowess'. A little white girl joined them, while other children nodded off to sleep on their parents' knees. The evening ended with a sketch of a witch doctor who recommended that a troubled client should go to Caux. Last night, it was the second 'theme and variations' evening, taken on by François Orphelin and John Harris, a young Harvard graduate, who has been working with the theatre here all summer.

The afternoons have had discussion groups or regional meetings, a 'Meet with Bill and Clara Jaeger' time, and a lively debate on 'tribes are a positive factor in society' (carried by 50 votes to 30, with 14 abstentions).

We are trying to put our minds to next year, and the different ways of using the 50th anniversary of Moral Re-Armament to reach the media and continue the advance of a work that is going forward on every continent. We would much value any thoughts and convictions that you may have on this, and also on the shape of next year's conferences here. Pierre Spoerri suggested some overall theme for the Caux summer, such as 'A time for moral and spiritual re-armament'. Perhaps there is meant to be more of a continuous general session, with a series of round-table style gatherings within that framework: on advancing the Mediterranean dialogue started at the beginning of this summer, the debt debate to take place here during the industrial session, the inner cities and their problems (discussed during a lightning visit by Hari Shukla and Gerald Henderson), the preservation of creation and the debate between science and ethics (Cardinal König would like to advance this idea), and a session for families and family doctors.

We may also be meant to have another training session for young people, along the lines of this year, but possibly also a more selective session for those who are already starting out on the road of faith, but who are searching for a life calling, and who would benefit from a serious look at the world and at the instrument for changing it that is MRA.

With sunny, warm greetings from Caux,

Andrew Stallybrass