

MOUNTAIN HOUSE · CAUX

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

22nd August, 1988

Dear Friends,

We are into the last movement of the glorious symphony that has been this summer; only a few pages of the score to go, and the music rushes on, the conductor beating away, and the orchestra rather wearily trying to keep up with the time! There's an autumn chill in the air again, and the leaves are starting to turn and to fall. Our days are fuller than ever, not just with the conference itself, but also with smaller, more private sessions, planning for the future work here and there, for Caux next summer, for the future of our publications. Invitations are launched, and difficult decisions are being made.

Tonight, the third round table conference starts, with a small, select group of top industrialists from America, Japan and Europe. The table is in actual fact a large oval, set up in the Panorama room (formerly the coffee lounge). On Wednesday night, the 15th in this series of industrial sessions gets under way, during which there will be another informal, private session on the problem of the Third World debt. The house is again filling up fast, after a slight dip in the graph. By tomorrow, we'll be over 480 people, and you can't cram managing directors four to a room!

By next week, there will be a 4-page report on the 'Change in the Cities' session, which is going to be sent out to the press and to all the participants, and which we can all use as we see fit. It is clear that the session was in part the product of many years of patient work 'on the ground' in different parts of the world. But it is also clear that we were led to a theme that was on the minds of people: not what we thought they were interested in, or what we thought that they should be interested in, but what they actually were concerned with. This meant that many of those in the house were here for the first time, were new to MRA, and were professionally involved in the issues discussed.

For example, some months ago, I took one of the French organisers of the session to meet the mayor of Geneva. He was very interested, and sent one of the heads of the social services for the entire session. At the end this man referred publicly to the French subtitle for the session. 'Change in the cities is not everyone's business,' he said, 'it's mine. And change needs to start with me.' This from someone who confessed that he knew nothing of Moral Re-Armament 7 days before. We now have a new ally who is keen to see mini-Cauxs develop on the level of the city. The mayor arranged for a bus party of 50 to visit the city, and to be received at the historic mansion on the edge of the old city where the authorities welcome their guests.

The excellent media coverage has continued, with three- and four-column reports in the local paper from Montreux and in the largest circulation French-language paper from Lausanne. 'To change the city? The human way' headlined one; 'The individual in the front line' said the

other. The French Swiss TV news have also noticed that we are alive and in business, and are in the process of preparing something (for which all prayers are welcome!).

There have been 22 Latin Americans in Caux over the last two weeks. Last Sunday evening, they all took the platform, with the music and rhythm that we expect from them. Most of those who spoke were here for the first time. Countries with deep unhealed wounds were represented, and healing the hurts of the past was an ever-present theme for them. One man from El Salvador, whose brother was one of the first priests killed in the violence spoke of how he had learnt to forgive. 'It is a commitment you have to remake all the time,' he said. There are many who had decided to forgive the atrocities against their families and friends; if only they could unite and speak out, they could become a national force for reconciliation, he thought.

A Central American union organiser, in a smaller meeting, spoke of his hatred for the Americans, and with tears in his eyes, asked for forgiveness. 'Our sins are like stones that we carry,' he said. 'When we go to confession we often get rid of the small stones from our pockets but keep carrying the big stone weighing on our shoulders. By this apology, my stone has broken in half.' The other half was his feelings against the military, and two days later, this stone too fell away.

Two Guatemalan army colonels were in Caux, on the invitation of a left-wing Guatemalan lawyer who in 1980 had escaped into exile after an assassination attempt against him by a right-wing military death squad. A liberation from hatred which he experienced in Caux two years ago through seeing the film 'For the love of tomorrow' about the experience of Irène Laure had given him a passion to work for national reconciliation. It was very moving to see these men together, and they made their mark on the ambassadors from Guatemala, Costa Rica and El Salvador, who all came up for a day. We have also welcomed a group of five Cambodians, four of them from the Site 2 camp on the Thai-Cambodian border. They bring the terrible sufferings of their people very close.

Two days were spent discussing this first year of the new 'For a Change' magazine. There was much gratitude for the opportunities that it has given us to break new ground, to reach new people. Much time was given to seeing how we can improve the content, the marketing and the manning. One practical conclusion was the need for a simple and clear statement of aims, printed inside on page two. An afternoon and evening was likewise taken up on the French forebear of FAC 'Changer'.

There has been, running through many of our talks, a sense that we are on the brink of some new step in the development of MRA, a personal challenge to each one of us to deepen our commitment, certainly, but also some new collective ways of doing and going. One underlying question is the content we each of us give to those three letters. Who is in MRA, and who isn't? The spirit is more than ever needed. Can God give us the confidence and fire that take us out to the wider circle of allies that a session like the cities one puts us in touch with? If we do that, will He then give us the reinforcements that are needed for the inner core, the structures, without which the reaching out becomes impossible?

Yours ever,

Andrew Stallybrass