

# REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

## Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE  
RUE DU PANORAMA  
CH-1824 CAUX

PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

Monday, 31st July 1989

Dear Friends,

The last day of the month - and only one week since the last letter, but it seems like two or three! What amazing, rich, full days they have been. What unexpected gifts God has given so far this summer. We're only half way through, but it looks like being a vintage year to savour for a long time to come. Two nights ago, the housecount went over 500 for the first time, and we think it may be over 450 from now until after the industrial session.

Sitting in a translation cabin, while English was being spoken from the platform, I tuned in to the languages next to me: Chinese, Polish and Russian. On Friday, there were some magic moments of profoundly felt emotion. Renate Assam, a young Austrian, told how at the time of the Waldheim affair she had been led to face up to her country's past, not just as victim of history, but as an architect and actor in the Nazi period.

A Russian philosopher followed her on the platform, and turned to the theme of the before-breakfast sessions on 'inner freedom'. 'In the totalitarian socialist countries, everything is decided ahead of time. From the level of the electrons right up to Stalin, everything is decided for you. My greatest experience has been the discovery of freedom. It happened in three stages. Firstly, a freedom from the yoke of the state which stops you thinking your own thoughts. Then there was the discovery of God, of an inner freedom, of a world full of the unexpected, the miraculous, of divine love for each individual. Finally, I've learnt here something for my life: that inner freedom can't just be our private property. We must share it, and refuse the privilege of being free on our own, alongside others who are not yet free. It means also knowing how to share not just the qualities but also the sins. I want to ask forgiveness of all those who have suffered at the hands of my country: Eastern Europe, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany. For the evil, but also the fear, the suffering, the lies.'

None of us ever dreamt we'd hear such words from the Soviet Union, and they came at a time when the house was full with people from other areas of tension and conflict - a large group from many of the different communities of Lebanon, Greeks and Turks, Greek and Turkish Cypriots, Jew and Palestinian, and thirty or so Poles. The next day, one of the Poles in turn apologised for his hatred towards the Russian people. The Russian philosopher commented before leaving that the hatreds boiling under the surface in Eastern Europe are even greater than in Lebanon. Along with the rebuilding of family life, this is the great task awaiting those who want to work for the moral and spiritual re-armament of these countries, he believes.

In my memory, Caux has never seen so many meetings going on at the same time, so many different groups. As well as the main meetings, there have been 'Mediterranean dialogue' seminars meeting in the theatre foyer, 'Preservation of the Creation' scientists, theologians and thinkers meeting in the panorama room, young people meeting where they could (chorus rehearsals have been held at 10.30pm!). We're perhaps a little glazed, shell-shocked by it all. It will take time to digest, and yet as always,

the tides of people come and go, and the space and leisure to evaluate are rare. No one person could absorb it all; I can only try to pass on first impressions.

A brilliant young Polish pianist shook the piano and the house with her fiery playing. We've had African and Arabic songs in the meetings, a Russian lullaby, a Lebanese sketch on their divided communities each with its own illustrative pop-song theme before they all sang together 'Lebanon will be rebuilt again, more beautiful than before'. A dead-pan Pole explained that he had no sense of humour, but his compatriots wanted to tell us some Polish jokes which he would try to translate. Would we please laugh, whether we understood the jokes or not! We've had an evening with Alan Thornhill - extracts from his writings and his plays; a German cast from Bonn travelled through the night to put on a dramatic reading of Hugh Steadman Williams' play 'Skeletons'. Karen Hodgson has given us a picture in song of the immigrants going from Europe to the USA.

Medical ethics, gene technology, the tropical rain forests and the global green-house effect have all been discussed by the group of powerful personalities who are becoming friends, at the initiative of Cardinal König. 'The Holy Spirit has been with us. We must continue,' he said, in a message he left for the participants. Geoffrey Lean, one of those taking part, and environmental correspondent for 'The Observer' newspaper, made a link with the Mediterranean dialogue in yesterday's meeting, speaking of 'the Mediterranean model' which sprang from 'not just an agreement but success' in clearing up pollution. 'The problems can't be solved without global cooperation and partnership, and they can't be solved without a new agreement between the rich and the poor countries,' he said. The Mediterranean, according to Lean, gave hope and set an example, where neighbours sat together, even those at war with each other.

A Turkish woman told how she used to pray to God only when she was frightened or when she wanted something. Here, through silence, she and her husband had saved their almost-broken marriage. Ramez Salame from Beirut quoted four conditions for dialogue: To consider the other as an absolute equal; To open up the deepest things in my life, the deepest truths in my heart, to him; To want the best for the other; To accept and even invite criticism of my views, opinions and beliefs. 'To dialogue,' he said, 'is to grow together in knowledge of the truth and in love for the other.'

There has been a painful struggle in many to move beyond blaming the other group, the other community, and to resist answering back when hurtful things are said. In private meals, walks and meetings, there have been many deep reconciliations. Einar Engebretsen illustrated the need for us to measure ourselves by God's absolute moral standards rather than with the neighbours. Then we have a real picture of ourselves. If we compare ourselves with other individuals and other countries, we may reach hell with our self-respect still intact, because others are heading there faster, but we still end up in hell!

Finally, a word of grateful thanks to our hard-working friends in MRA films in London. In recent weeks we have received, and used, 'For the love of tomorrow' in Chinese (Mandarin) and Russian, and now we have just received the Polish version, which had its premiere yesterday.

Yours ever,

Andrew Stallybrass