

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

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Dear friends,

Another Monday races round, and I am again facing a blank screen and a full week gone. We are no less overwhelmed by the waves of people flooding into the house, so many of them for the first time, and many after rather epic journeys across the newly opened frontiers of Europe. Last night, for example, at three in the morning a minibus arrived from Poland, after a journey of nearly 2'000 kilometres. And there are now large groups from Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania, and a theatre troupe from Moscow who stirred us last Monday with Chekhov (a series of sketches), and who tonight present a contemporary drama.

The order of their plays was in part dictated by beards - the Chekhov could benefit from the facial hair provided by nature, and they preferred to shave for their second play (both are presented in Russian, with translation). 'This place is like the dream we had at the beginning of Communism,' said one of the Moscow group, and they were all deeply moved by the apology of a German who had served on the Russian front during the last war. Not a family was untouched by the war with Germany, but, they said, not a family had remained untouched by suffering inflicted by their own government. An amateur-professional theatre group from Bonn drove through the night after work on Friday to spend a weekend here, at their own expense, and present a dramatised reading of Hugh Williams' play 'Liberation'.

There are people of all ages: a senior Iranian, who danced in the Caux Palace before the war, and a professor who in the opening explanatory session on the history of the house said that he'd been here during the war as a caretaker, as well as large numbers of children, and a majority of young people. Two senior Russians from Novosti Press are here too - one of them was here twenty years ago, and wrote a major feature on MRA.

The translation board for last night's 'Icebreaker' evening of coffee and entertainment in a jam-packed great hall started: 'Channel 1 - Magyar, Channel 2 - Czech, Channel 3 - Japanese, Channel 4 - po polsku (Polish), and Channel 5 - Russian'. The chorus sang, 'There are no strangers in the world, only friends we haven't met'. 'The family trees of Europe have long branches,' said one of the two 'animators' of the evening, explaining the international ramifications of their two families. Between humorous sketches and music, they walked from table to table introducing and interviewing people, presenting a living picture of the variety of people and countries represented.

The morning launching of the youth-hosted session, 'Shaping a new Europe', was one of the best meetings in my memory of Caux (see

the enclosed press story), as the long and careful preparation of an international team at last bore fruit. Over the platform hung the flags of the nations present, drawn by the many children in the house. Successive speakers wielded a paint brush, their strokes making by the end of the meeting a large 'welcome'. At the end, a Bulgarian complained that the children had copied the old flag of his country, with its communist symbol in the middle. He climbed a ladder, and cut out the offending piece!

The house seems to bulge at the seams. From 'house full', we fill up further. The usual last-minute shrinkage is not taking place: there are more unexpected arrivals than non-arrivals of those expected! And numbers will increase yet further this week, never dropping below 650, so all are stretched to the limit. But the effort is a cheerful one - there is a sense that we really are shaping a new Europe. The Polish-Canadian futurologist Professor Wojciechowski (try saying 'watch your house key' said one helpful friend) spoke in a seminar of the need to move from social darwinism to a new ideology of solidarity. It is not by chance that the Polish popular movement has given a new life to the word, he said.

The week started with the close of the Round Table, the 5th meeting in Caux of a smaller group of senior industrialists from Japan, Europe and the USA. In a remarkable feat of meeting - magic, Dick Ruffin called up a just-arrived group of young black Americans from Atlanta, and introduced them to 85-year-old Frits Philips, a real, live big industrialist. They'd never met one before in person, had they? Dr Philips spoke of the trade tensions that have led to wars in the past. One could either say 'What a pity,' or try to do something. He had chosen the latter course. They had started a dialogue between Europe, America and Japan, without having any solutions to propose, but with a readiness to really listen to each other. He was followed by a senior Japanese executive, now working in an international agency in Washington, who gave us a memorable insight into the Japanese decision-making process: for example, an explanation of the word 'hai', meaning 'yes, I understand' not 'yes, I agree'.

Then a brave team took on to provide a full and interesting programme for all those staying in the house through the big change-over after the industrial session and into the present bonanza. On a personal note, I've been enjoying undeserved sympathy for an arm in a sling: last Monday two of us climbed the Dents du Midi, and I came back with a sprained wrist, dictating a Napoleonic arm-across-chest posture. Fortunately, it was my right wrist, and I am left-handed! But typing is less easy than it was.

I thought some might be disappointed if I didn't at least end with a weather report. So here goes... Vulture hang-gliders circle in the clear blue sky over the Rochers de Naye, and we've constantly spilled out onto the terrace and the garden for meals and group meetings, but we've also had the first thunder storms of the summer, clearing and cooling the air.

Warm greetings from the happy hordes here,

Andrew Stallybrass