

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

TÉL. 021/9634821
TÉLÉFAX 021/9635260
TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

6th August, 1990

Dear friends,

After long hot days and long hot nights, we have just had an impressive thunder storm, and the first rain in weeks, to mark the end of the youth-hosted session, and the start of the build up to the cities session that starts on Tuesday. Part of me was hoping that the storm would go on and provide me with a valid excuse for not getting up - the electronics of a word-processor are vulnerable to electric storms in ways the old trusted typewriter would find hard to understand. The autumn fruits are ripening fast and the very first errant leaves are yellowing and falling. Good friends deposited a delicious gift of mountain raspberries and cream in our room one night, so we can vouch for the quality of this year's vintage! Other friends who have started the summer with us have already said farewell, and headed for home, and fresh friends arrive.

As hundreds leave - three hundred over these two-three days, and as many new arrivals - we realise that the amazing harvest goes on. The labourers are rather few, and we wonder what we are meant to learn for the future, if, as we suspect, this is merely a foretaste of things to come. In the years ahead, will the flood of new people from the newly freed countries of Eastern and Central Europe grow? How can we best select and prepare them, care and translate for them? How can we follow up the many, many people here for the first time, who have started to discover new things, and who want help and support? Our hearts, travel budgets and diaries will have to stretch to include these 'new' countries and friends.

There is a certain hunger for silence. A before-breakfast 'meditation' drew the early risers to the great hall for half an hour of silence, with a short reading and some music and candles. As dawn broke, you saw others out on the terrace, sitting on the grass or a bench. As one of the organisers said, 'There is a hole in the heart, an inner hunger for meaning, for a relationship with God and truth.' Then there has been a freshness in the meetings, in the presentation of old truths (and new): Andrea Bräckle on the platform (my favourite flirt, and one of the youngest participants in the conference) as a visual aid, reminding us to think for the next forty years, and the major issues she'll have to face; a computer-programmed character change machine; interviews and dialogues; sketches and much humour.

One memorable encounter was between King Mikhael and Queen Anne of Romania, and the two groups of Romanians in the house. Eliane and I longed to be Romanian-speaking flies on the wall! It was a moment of deep emotion for both sides. The King and Queen were meeting over tea in room 415 with the group of students and young people. Their room was next door one side, and the other side was the room of two senior editors, unreformed Marxists, from Novosti Press in Moscow, now the government information department. One of the young Romanians, an architecture student, had brought drawings to sell to raise money for the stay in Caux of East Europeans. Several were of the King's summer palace, where he

grew up as a boy, and the King was surprised to receive one as a gift.

There was a morning of difficult choices when all the groups from the former iron curtain countries held seminars: Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania. Another moment of deep emotion was the question at the Romanian seminar, 'Why did you forget us for so long, for forty years?' Two Westerners responded. Then the afternoon saw another series of difficult choices: seminars on the Soviet Union with the Novosti men, with the group of black students from Atlanta, with the Lebanese and with the Africans in the house. I was in the difficult position of translating the Russians (from French, not Russian!) while having to watch the Atlantans in the great hall give a demonstration of the gang warfare that they have been fighting with such effect in their schools. At one point, I just had to turn my back in order to maintain concentration. One of the Russians told how he had come to Caux 22 years before. The article he had written then had been a slap in the face of those who had welcomed him, but he was glad that they had turned the other cheek, and welcomed him back. An evening saw folk songs and music from all these Europeans. So much has been happening; so many people and so many parallel programmes mean that my view of this week is more partial than usual. For many this week has been a stretch, of the heart, and of the timetable, as talks in groups of varying sizes have gone on till all hours.

There have been talks and reconciliations between the members of different groups - some East Europeans refused to see the second Russian play put on by the Moscow theatre group, but then met some of the actors over a meal. A Pole spoke of the changes in his family towards their old enemies the Germans. The new Jaroslav existed, he said, to liquidate the sources of hatred in people, and to bring about the same changes that his family had experienced. A young woman talked simply and movingly of 'the miracle of reconciliation' with her step-mother. And at the end of that meeting, we were all handed with seeds to plant, as living symbols of change and growth. 'I love talking, but here I've learned to be open and to listen to opinions other than my own,' said a young Hungarian. There was no discrimination here against atheists or believers in other faiths. Gifts were presented: a Romanian icon, brightly coloured Russian cups and bowls, Czech books and a candle stick for the Protestant church. An Italian psychologist presented a gold chalice at a ceremony in the Catholic church for use in the Jaroslav centre's church.

Classical music of a very high standard has been woven through these days: two superb piano concerts in the theatre, and interludes in the meetings, speaking to us in another language that didn't need any translation. The new musical play 'The fantastical adventures of Mr G and son' has received an enthusiastic reception at its premiere in the jam-packed theatre, but since so many in the house were leaving before the next performance, your correspondent sacrificed his seat and will see it another day!

In long-distance running, there is a phenomenon called 'hitting the wall', when the body, having burned up all the available reserves of energy starts to burn up muscle to provide more energy. Once through this barrier, you're good for many more miles, to the end of the race. I may say I enjoy distance running! Today, appeals have gone out for help on all the work teams, and especially for the housekeepers, those largely unseen saints of the house: never in my memory will so many beds have been 'emptied', re-made and refilled in such a short space of time. So, on we go.

Damp greetings from a cooling Caux,

Andrew Stallybrass

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Caux, 8th August, 1990

'Change in the cities - getting to the roots of the crises in our communities' is the theme that has brought more than 600 community leaders, elected representatives, and officials, including police officers, from all continents, to a one-week conference in Caux, Switzerland.

The speakers at this morning's opening session included a senior French civil servant, the newly elected mayor of the city of Lodz in Poland, a State Representative and a leader of a black high-school anti-crime initiative from the USA, and a shanty-town community leader from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Bernard Gauthier, a senior French civil servant, underlining that he was speaking as a private individual, said, 'The problems connected with urban life seem for some to be linked with the very nature of the city, its technical conception, its structures or its management.' The time has come, he continued, to concern ourselves with 'the deeper causes of the dehumanization of our cities'. The roots of the problems lay in man himself, he said. In ancient societies, the city was built around a concept of God and the sacred. Modern man had built up the city as a reflection of his relationship with the new gods of consumerism. Rather than trying to reimpose the sacred at the centre of the city, Gauthier proposed a search for the meaning of life by individual citizens.

Workshop group meetings will provide opportunities to share experiences on 'Drugs, crime and gangs', 'Making multi-cultural, multi-racial cities work', 'Schools - educating for full citizenship', 'Responsible local democracy - bridging the gap between the citizen and those elected to govern', 'Job training and job creation - grassroots economic development' and 'Conflict resolution and mediation'.

The conference, at the Moral Re-Armament conference centre, continues until Sunday.

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10th August, 1990, Caux, Switzerland

Twelve black teenagers from Atlanta, Georgia, today told an international audience at Caux, Switzerland, how they are tackling violence, often black-on-black, in Atlanta's schools. The group, known as Black Teen Advancement (BTA), was founded in February 1989 "to take a stand against violence in the Atlanta Metropolitan area and to prove the prophets of doom incorrect that young black males are an endangered species", said BTA spokesman Whitney Van White.

BTA now involves over 2,000 Atlanta high school students. An independent study, they say, has shown a 40 per cent decline in teenage violence in Atlanta's public schools since BTA's formation. This year BTA has been recognized by America's National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP) with its annual award for outstanding service to the community, as well as a citation from the Governor of Georgia. Atlanta, which has one of the highest per capita crime rates in the USA, has proclaimed November 14th as BTA day.

Decked out in baseball hats and T-shirts - "our battle dress", as one put it - the group addressed 600 people including mayors, city government officials and community workers attending Moral Re-Armament's "International Consultation on Change in the Cities", at this Swiss village of Caux.

"Our aim", said BTA co-founder Feiji McKay, "is to create better individuals who will do God's will, starting with ourselves." There was a need to fight racial discrimination in every country. "Ebony and ivory are two of the greatest colors in the world", he said.