

# REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

## Centre de Rencontres Internationales

TÉL. 021/9634821  
TÉLÉFAX 021/9635260  
TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE  
RUE D'U PANORAMA  
CH-1824 CAUX

8th July, 1991

Dear friends,

How wrong can you be? In November last year, when some of us met to prepare this summer's conferences in Caux, we predicted a quieter time, with fewer people. We've just started with a bang, with a big reception for local friends and authorities and diplomats, and with 350 participants, and the numbers go steadily up and up and up till we reach around 700 in two weeks. To remind you, we regard the house as full when we're anything over 500, so the accommodation team are scouring the region for extra beds, seeing who can be encouraged to come later, in August, and we are thanking God for another rich season, reflecting a hunger for what this house has to offer. Wouldn't it be sad if we were just a handful here, wondering whether anyone's interested and listening?

The summer has been late in coming - last Sunday, on a walk in the mountains, we stopped at a simple restaurant where the proprietor told us that the snow had only gone two days before. There is a late profusion and abundant variety of wild flowers. And the people present and expected are equally varied, and almost as numerous. We've been glad to avoid the worst of the heavy heat of the valley, and we've enjoyed some spectacular thunderstorms.

The conference has only been running since Friday, but the house has been filling up for much longer, and a great team of young and old came ahead, some well ahead, to prepare. Special thanks go to the powerful New Zealand contingent of 8. There's a chorus of 15 young people from 13 countries, all of who have been here for some time. Many of them were here for the recent outside let for the television symposium in Montreux, and the visits of delegates from the International Labour Conference in Geneva.

The two major experiments with new ways of doing things have both got off to a good start: the 'open forum' planning-preparation meetings with most or all of the household, after breakfast, at 9.45, where needs can be shared, where we can prepare and plan for a big day like yesterday's public launching. The second innovation is the 'discussion and work communities': all the work teams of the house, who meet once a day, at 5pm (when they're not working), to discuss a theme, get to know each other, give everyone the chance to express themselves, and feel at home. They are limited to two working languages where possible, to aid communication, but this only limits marginally the amazing variety of people in a 'community'.

A third major experiment has also started well: the Caux Scholars Programme, with 23 university students, mainly from the US, plus an impressive group of 'faculty'. Most knew little or

nothing about MRA, but are responding wholeheartedly to learning about the world through meeting people and hearing the lived-out experiences of retired ambassador Mackenzie, or the Australian politician Kim Beazley, for example. And as well as academic study, the students are working in different teams around the house - very visibly at the front desk - and all manned and served the great buffet at yesterday's lunch.

Ambassadors and senior diplomats came from China, Cyprus, Colombia, El Salvador, Pakistan, Philippines, Peru, the Soviet Union, Sudan, and Switzerland. They mixed with neighbours from the village, suppliers and authorities from the region and canton. For some flavour of the meeting, see the accompanying press story. There were remarkable talks in the relaxed atmosphere of the dining room and the garden. A senior man from a still-communist country told us of the moral and spiritual emptiness in his country, due to the fact that religion has been suppressed. 'There is a vacuum in people's minds. We have tried to fill it with Marxism, and we have failed,' he said. 'We need a moral re-armament. You must come and help us.' A tougher colleague said, 'I hear things that I do not hear elsewhere.' The largest circulation paper in French-speaking Switzerland this morning carries a two column photograph and story under the headline 'Europe in the making'. A young diplomat attending the conference with his wife and two children said, 'I usually get to know problems through reading documents. Here I do it through meeting people.'

Archie Mackenzie deeply stirred the Chinese guests with his humble apology for Britain's past wrongs towards their country, and his four challenges facing China - and the world - were recalled over lunch: 'stability without stagnation; freedom without anarchy; development without ecological catastrophe; creating one world without losing our individual identities'. 'We need the note of repentance more in international relations,' he concluded, 'and it's coming.'

New, less usual languages are being heard around the house: Bulgarian, Czech, Polish. We are again running out of channels for translation in the meeting hall. And the theme for the summer as a whole, and this European session, could hardly be more topical. As one said, the East and Central Europeans have moved from euphoria to despair, are now between despair and realism, and need encouragement to move on to reconstruction. The Stephans, a Polish couple from London, stirred many by recalling their own experiences of suffering (see the Profile in 'For a Change'), but also of faith and overcoming the past.

Our thoughts go out to all those who are with us here in thought and prayer. We feel the need more than ever to rely on God, and not just on past experience. We are trying new ways; we are meeting many new people from countries and groups that we know little about; history and geography have to be re-learned from living books on two legs. We need enough stillness, silence and prayer, and here we can be at one with you.

Warmest greetings from your privileged friends in Caux,  
Andrew Stallybrass