

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

Monday, 9th August 1993

Dear friends,

Blank screen and blank mind meet! A young group flattered me last night by asking my advice on the weather - was this a good night to get up early and go up the Rochers de Naye to see the sun-rise? Well, as I looked out on a darkened but overcast sky this morning, I was glad I said "No". They went up anyway, and had a close-up view of cloud. Such is youth. Though it must be said that we have had a very pleasant spell of warmer autumn days, with just the occasional thunder storm. I've spotted - and eaten - my first wild raspberries: a sure sign of the seasons' inexorable advance. Perhaps the weather will clear up later, the clouds will move on. It would be nice, because many in the house are heading off for outings and picnics after the meeting this morning.

As so often, I can only wonder at all that gets fitted into one week here. This session, on 'Regions in crisis, regions in recovery - learning from one another', only started last Monday. The Holy Spirit is perhaps a little like the mighty ocean waves that can carry the expert surfer with such grace and speed. It is not easy to judge the right moment; it looks so simple to the onlooker, and yet is so hard to do right. There have been times a little like this in Caux: times of magic, spontaneity, feeling, healing, grace. (And a few times when the wave goes past and leaves us where we were!). There has indeed been an amazing variety of participants and through them of situations present, so many suffering countries and peoples. Rarely have we felt so close to the pains of the world. Bosnians, Croatians, from the Horn of Africa, Zaïre; many private meetings, intense gatherings rounds tables on the terrace, or in small salons, behind closed doors. Who knows where it will all lead?

Some have rightly expressed a certain longing for 'hard news', and not too much of the 'purple prose'. They will be well-served this week. The press team have had a busy time, with four press stories going out. And Wednesday brought a major, four-column, half-page article on Caux in the 'Journal de Genève et Gazette de Lausanne', the main paper of reference in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. There is not one cynical note. 'Europe in the making mobilizes Moral

Re-Armament' reads the headline, and the sub-head goes on, 'The events shaking the old continent are at the heart of the sessions in Caux organized by a movement whose aim is still to "heal wounds and build bridges".' The Polish embassy in Bern rang within hours of the article coming out to ask what Poles were here in Caux and to ask for more information.

Fine music has played a very important part in the week, with two concert evenings of great variety but a common excellence, and with songs and music in the meetings. Abdelrahman Elkhatib, an Egyptian artist living in Sweden, has given a decidedly Eastern flavour, with an impromptu Western chorus singing in Arabic. Jonathan and Elizabeth Sparey and Kathleen Dodds, and Karin Patterson, a fine American cellist, have all contributed richly, beyond words.

I have rarely had a feeling of so much going on, so many people I don't know, such a spirit at work. But frustratingly, I feel I only get the odd glimpse. Perhaps we are growing wiser, more discreet: much goes on in the communities, is shared there in smaller groups of new friends, but is rightly not then shared in team meetings. Chance encounters, meals, give a hint at the life being found, the inner battles being fought. A superb meeting, by chance rather than design with only women speaking, took us from Northern Ireland to the Sudan, via the Baltic countries and Europe East and West.

Yesterday I had the opportunity to preach in the Protestant chapel, on the subject of angels, and truly, there must be many angels at work here. Apparently, the Greek and Hebrew words for angel do not differentiate between the human and supernatural helpers of God. Archie Mackenzie quoted someone here for the first time who said that Caux was like three college seminars, two church services and a family reunion all rolled into one!

An official group of three from China is with us, from the Chinese Association for International Understanding, the non-governmental organization that has welcomed several MRA groups to China. It was fun to see them helping to prepare fried fish with a sweet and sour sauce in the kitchen. The Cambodian group gave us some of their culture, and got many on to the stage to learn a Khmer dance. But they also showed us a video of the peace march, and slides of the MRA seminar in Phnom Penh, helping us to understand that there is no other country in the world where so many in the government have connections with MRA, going back over so many years.

So we head on towards the next session (this one ends on Thursday).

Friendly greetings from here,

Andrew Stallybrass