

# REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

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## Centre de Rencontres Internationales

TÉL. 021 / 963 48 21  
TÉLÉFAX 021 / 963 52 60  
TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE  
RUE DU PANOFAMA  
CH - 1824 CAUX

Monday, 8th August, 1994

Dear friends,

At long last, the threatened thunder storm is breaking as I write. The unbearable heat of the valley, and the just bearable heat of the mountain, are being washed away by cooling rain - but this is meant to be a day for picnics and outings. I myself am in shorts and T-shirt, planning to head for another mountain, and after some brilliant staff-work, the hordes of the conference are meant to be heading in a dozen different directions after breakfast. Perhaps by then, the storm will have passed - we'll see. But for now, I think of the words of one of my favourite poets, Robert Frost: 'The clouds were low and hairy in the skies, Like locks blown forward in the gleam of eyes.'

Many have travelled far to get here, and have overcome considerable difficulties. Yet, as one of the session organizers said at the opening, we are just starting out on a journey together. This is one of those letters that comes just half way through a session, when it's hard, if not impossible to evaluate just where we are at. Yesterday's theme was 'Creating peace in a multi-faith, multi-ethnic world', and certainly a hallmark of this session has been colour and variety, even if it cannot always be described as peaceful! Africa makes its presence known: groups form and burst into song and dance for any excuse and none. Malaysian orchids grace the front hall and the platform in the great hall. We've had a rich taste of Maori culture. There is a bubbling, joyous cauldron of women sharing deep experiences together with a well-integrated and non-negligible number of men.

'Today if we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other,' Mother Teresa of Calcutta said in her message to the organizers, read to a packed hall at the opening - a message that several Swiss newspapers have since carried. 'That man, that woman, that child is my brother or my sister. God has made each one of us for greater things - to love and be loved.' If we could see the image of God in our neighbour, she went on, we would not need tanks and generals, bombs and guns. She urged the participants to use love and compassion, starting in their own homes to create peace.

Mrs Anna Abdallah Msekwa, Minister of State in the Office of the Tanzanian Prime Minister, arrived with a group of 15 from Tanzania including others from the leadership, but also her driver and the house-keeper of State House. A university dean from Iceland joined a group from Lithuania and native Americans. One channel of the translation is given over to Swahili. A Romanian friend told me a delightful story of a quarrel he'd mediated in. A Pole got very angry with a Kenyan who had little idea where to find Poland on the map, and no idea who Poland's neighbours were. My friend turned the situation by demonstrating that the Pole was just as ignorant about Kenya, and each could fill in the gaps in their knowledge from the other!

Last night's programme was described as an 'international buffet, entertainment and cultural explosion'. The vast buffet and the team of volunteers offered an endless variety of foods from around the world, and then when most could no longer move - my waist-line was threatening explosion - there was a similar variety of musical, games and verbal items from the 52 countries listed in the opening roll call, including a multi-racial children's chorus. I'm sure that the dining room has never seen anything like it. 'Five Alive', a group of young Kenyan Gospel singers, gave the old theatre a similar shock with a stunning opening concert that had people dancing in the aisles.

Mrs Abdallah spoke at the opening meeting of how she came to launch the idea for a first 'women's initiative' in Caux in 1991. She spoke of her previous experience at an international women's conference. 'We all pretended to believe that someone, somewhere was the stumbling block for the advancement of women. That someone had to be dealt with,' she said. 'But who is that someone? Could that someone be myself? These are not questions for politicians.' It was easier to blame men or political ideologies, she went on. 'We discussed peace at the conference, but we could not make peace among ourselves.' She had discovered in Caux, she said, 'an atmosphere which I had missed in the previous UN-sponsored conferences'. 'The individual is a prerequisite, a determining factor of peace,' she concluded.

Mrs Yukika Sohma, from Japan, who has pioneered a non-governmental organization to care for refugees, also spoke. She told how she had raised a yen for every Japanese - 120 million yen, in four months, much of it from children. 'None of us lack the vision for peace,' Mrs Sohma said, 'what we often lack is the first step in action, to see clearly where we are wrong, and to be humble enough to admit it.' To her friends who say that it is difficult to act, she replies, "It is not that you cannot do it, it is that you do not do it. There is a great difference between willingness and action."

Dr. Christiane Garin, a Swiss surgeon, welcomed participants. She herself had found here 'the courage to commit myself to serve' - she had spent twelve years in Southern Africa. 'For there to be peace in the 21st century,' Dr. Garin went on, 'we must bridge the divides between North and South, East and West. We must find practical ways, even if they are modest, to help each other and to share. This is not just a question for politicians and businessmen. We must rally all the forces of goodwill, and find the sparks of wisdom and common sense that the Creator can give us.'

A personal message from the woman who is speaker of the Swedish Parliament was also read. It said, 'The standards of absolute honesty, purity of motive and thoughts, unselfishness and love of God, will - if taken seriously - pull down the walls of bitterness, distrust, fear and hate which divide man from man, and nation from nation. These principles for which you stand will in the long run help to bring about a political state of affairs internationally which will overcome terrorism and violence, create peace and cooperation, and lead to a fair division of wealth in the world.'

As the time for breakfast and outings approaches, and as I head towards the bottom of the page, it looks as if the clouds are clearing.

Warm greetings from a slightly cooler Caux,

Andrew Stallybrass