

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANOPAMA
CH - 1824 CAUX

Monday, 29th August, 1994

Dear friends,

So here I am, here we all are, at the end of what certainly seems to have been one of the richest summers for quite a while. Some seventeen hundred people have taken part in the six different sessions spanning the seven weeks and a bit. It's not really in anyone's power to evaluate the secrets of so many hearts, where the most important resolutions are private. I strongly suspect that I'm embarking on what will turn out to be another bumper letter since the amazing flood continued until the very end, and our cup is overflowing.

The week started with outings and picnics, a glorious day, and sunburned, happy faces returning for supper. Then in the evening, a magical, faerie suspension of time, and transport to another world: an open-air production of Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' on the lawn, as the sun set and the sky darkened, with some sitting on their balconies to watch. The fairies were superb, indeed all the cast were. The music, from a group of 12 from 6 countries, wove in and out of the text. The technicians had worked wonders, including closed-circuit TV for the translators working from the booths overlooking the great hall! The chief magician, Melanie Trimble, was dragged out for rapturous applause at the end.

Two generals from the Sudan spoke together - they had been at school together, and then in the military academy. Then they had spent ten years fighting each other, on opposite sides in the civil war. Now both are ambassadors, and here in Caux, they were sharing a room together, a Christian and a Muslim, reading together the Bible and the Koran. They expressed their common call to work for peace. 'My faith got wings here in Caux last year,' said a woman from the Crimea. Her husband told friends how on his return from Caux a year ago, he had been led to work for reconciliation in the tense and difficult situation between Russians, Tatars, and the Ukrainians, and had managed to bring together the Orthodox and Muslim leaders to help make peace. We heard how Mrs Sohma stirred the Chinese delegation to the depths with her apology for Japan's cruelty in China, and her honesty about her own life. They had never heard anything like it.

We all made our way to outside the front entrance to welcome Prince Norodom Sirivudh, Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, who was one of four members of the present Cambodian government taking part in the 'Regions' session, among 52 Cambodians from the country and the diaspora. Prince Norodom Sirivudh said, 'I have never believed for a moment that the military option alone would deal with the problem of the Khmer Rouge. The government has decided to outlaw them, and the main door is now closed to them. But perhaps we must leave the kitchen door open for them. It is not a question of tolerating genocide, but we cannot pursue a policy of revenge. A government has the right to defend itself, but the people of Cambodia need hospitals, schools and roads more than a settling of scores.' The Prince continued, 'There are many people in my country for whom the first thought in the morning is American dollars. But money is not an aim in itself. We built the Angkor Wat temple without dollars. We need to recreate a spirit of reconciliation, of nobility and wisdom. That takes time.'

The Prince thanked the countries that had contributed to the return of peace to Cambodia, while recognizing that 'the wounds have not yet closed'. 'If our country is unstable, we affect our region, and if our region is unstable, we affect the world,' he said, 'There has been much passion in Cambodia's history, and passion is a source of suffering.' He also called on the Khmer Rouge to release their French, British and Australian hostages, just before leaving for Paris, where he had talks with Mr Alain Juppé, the French Foreign Minister. He pledged that he would do his 'very best to find a way to solve the problem'. 'Please convey this to the families of the hostages,' the Prince said. The Khmer Rouge don't just want a ransom, he continued, they want a political deal. He concluded, 'I hope we will see the Khmer Rouge here in Caux one day, and that we can dialogue with them.'

The Prince started by speaking of his own experience, 'taking off the jacket of Prince and Cabinet Minister'. 'I have seen the wheel turn: at the age of 20 I found myself in exile in France. I have known poverty. I had to work washing up in a restaurant, and now I'm Deputy Prime Minister,' he said. And take off his jacket he certainly did. The musical, variety evening saw him playing jazz on the piano, accompanying Sam Pono on the sax in the specially formed 'Royal Prince Band'. He explained that you may be a Cabinet Minister for a few years, but you are a pianist for life. And he then took up a guitar and sang a Bob Dylan song for us. We heard from one of those looking after the Cambodians that he ended the evening in the 'Caux café', rather to their concern, but that too had been a magical time of sharing. We're driven to talk of 'the magic of Caux' - where else does this sort of thing seem almost normal? One of the other government ministers knelt in the entrance hall to be blessed by a Buddhist monk before leaving.

Professor Grigori Pomerants, an orientalist and professor of the philosophy of culture from Moscow, and a 'graduate' of the Russian gulag, spoke of the need for 'a remedy to the poisons of modern development'. 'These diseases produce stresses in the West,' he went on, 'but they produce explosions in the East and the South.' Freedom in the West has gone beyond its optimum point, he claimed, and this has 'destroyed values and inner discipline without which freedom becomes impossible'. He

continued, 'Outer freedom depends on some inner constraints. The stability of the West depends on good traditions of values, work, discipline and respect for the law accumulated over centuries. The experience of our country is that this is easily lost.'

Professor Pomerants warned that 'the present spiritual crisis' threatened 'the destruction of civility'. He spoke of the Biblical characters of Martha and Mary - the former the busy worker, the latter given to reflection and contemplation. 'We need to move from a civilization of Martha to a civilization that finds the balance between both Martha and Mary,' Professor Pomerants said. 'We need a profound moral and spiritual re-
armament,' he concluded.

His wife, Zinaida Mirkina, a well-known poet, spoke with him. For her, the experience of Caux was a reversal of the story of the Tower of Babel. 'Here many languages come together to learn one language, God's language. If we don't learn this language, we will never truly meet one another,' she said. She had, she said, written 22 poems here! Over a meal, he told me how he was born within a few months of the Soviet State, and for many years has asked himself on his birthday, 'Who'll die first, you or communism?' They were only some among the steady flow of great intellectuals who have come from Russia to Caux - and they weren't the only ones to work on the vegetable team.

Pastor Amminadab Munyaneza, a Society of Friends (Quaker) minister from Rwanda, who had escaped with his family from the massacres, spoke of 'the picture of death and suffering in Africa'. But, he continued, 'We are not alone. God is with us. We can also speak of hope, of courageous men and women, of God leading people. I am in the plan of God to heal the wounds of my people. Above all we need an answer to hatred.'

The session closed after an amazing variety of speakers, from Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Zaïre, from Belarus and Russia, from Albania, Australia and Lebanon, with a moment of silent prayer. A young Australian spoke alongside his grandfather. 'You may fear that I am the victim of a harshly imposed moral life,' he started, before going on to reassure his audience, 'I've found God's values for myself.' He expressed his gratitude for having seen the world as a whole. 'You have shown us that we are part of your family,' a Cambodian lady said, in her thanks, going on, 'We learn here understanding, forgiveness, and love of country. We'll apply what we have learned here to our country.' 'We got here a charge on energy,' said one of the group from Belarus, 'We are embraced by the world here.'

A discreet but important group from the Horn of Africa - Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea and Ethiopia - met in private, as did several from ex-Yugoslavia. Doug Johnston of the CSIS told some of us that he feels that the group of Somalians that has grown up thanks to the patient, caring work of some Scandinavian friends and others, is probably the only hope for the future of that country. A Somali history professor said, 'Our people is broken in pieces, like a glass broken on the floor. I have been paralysed by despair, but I found here a light. Here I find the future of humanity.' Another professor, returning from a series of lectures in China to his university in the US made a special

detour to Caux for a few hours during our 'evaluation and perspectives' time, to meet up with his fellow Somalis, and find out how their meetings had gone. 'I sense that the spirit of Caux is of enormous importance to us Somalis,' he said. 'This is what we need. No-one, not the UN, can have this effectiveness.'

Then we have had three days of rapidly dropping numbers, of many farewells, and our first efforts at evaluation and distance. In a summer marked by financial and political scandals in several countries, the call by the 'Caux Round Table' for 'a world standard against which business behaviour can be measured' has provoked wide interest in business and media circles, and is clearly one highlight. It has been reported in leading financial papers in Britain, Japan, Italy and Spain, as well as in Switzerland. The 'women's initiative' on the theme of 'Creators of peace' was clearly another, as was the presence of important groups from Russia and Eastern and Central Europe throughout the summer. The summer has also been marked by the presentation and launching of the new book, 'Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft' by researchers from the 'Center for Strategic and International Studies' (CSIS), documenting Caux and MRA's role in the post-war reconciliation of France and Germany and in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe.

We had two more moments of magic with a cello and piano concert in the bay window of the great hall, as the sun set over the Jura. And after a final service in the Protestant chapel, we ended the summer with an unusual Sunday gathering, reading extracts from Jacques Henry's autobiography 'Enfant par hasard' ('Child of Chance'). 'Jacky', one of the founding generation of Caux, died of cancer in the Spring of this year, but after seeing the publication of this marvellous book.

Then there have also been preparatory meetings galore for the 1996 50th anniversary of Caux, and they go on. I hope you'll keep in touch through the World Bulletin. You'll see at the top the black and white, photocopyable version of our new logo, which will be ready shortly in colour. The first 'experimental' T-shirts have been seen around the house.

My thanks to all those who have written with encouragement, and all those who have carried this amazing summer in their prayers. Thanks too to all those who work to get these letters to you, here in Caux, and in all the different countries. The secretaries here have drawn my attention to the fact that this year marks the 10th anniversary of this operation! I'll celebrate tomorrow by going off on holiday!

Grateful farewells, until next year,

Andrew Stallybrass