

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

Monday, 10th July, 1995

Dear friends,

It is exactly a week since we set out from our home in Geneva for "our little chalet in the mountains", a week ago that we loaded up the car, promising ourselves that we'll be more disciplined next time, for the "montée à l'alpage", the traditional trek up to the higher summer pastures with the cattle. And so another Caux conference season begins, and I start again my efforts to include far-flung friends in the life, the adventure, the drama that ebbs and flows through this amazing place.

Another series of early mornings, struggling with words, as I look out over the lake and the mountains, as the light grows in the sky, and the colour comes back into the world. The house too has been filling up day by day with people and colour and life, with many fresh faces, and the usual variety of Caux: a Catholic priest from Zaïre, a Maronite bishop from Lebanon, a Russian Orthodox priest, for example. And as usual, the challenge: 'How is it all going to work? Do we have all the people we need? Who will...?' By God's Grace and the goodwill and sacrifice of many, the 'Unidentified Religious Object' cranks into gear, to quote the pungent phrase of one friend in a letter.

Before the start of the conferences, we had two days with meetings of preparations and discussions on the 50th anniversary of Caux as an MRA conference centre, which we will celebrate next year, in 1996. Clearly this is one theme that will run through the whole summer. Mike Brown has arrived from Australia with the draft of a magnificent new pictorial magazine on Caux that is in preparation. Camilla Nelson is at work on the permanent exhibition that will tell some of the story of Caux, and next week a professional film crew arrives to shoot a short promotional video.

On Thursday, the Caux Scholars Program started up for five weeks, with 13 participants, from 7 different countries, including a young woman from Vietnam, on her first visit outside her country. Two more are still trying to come, from Liberia and Nigeria, struggling with visas. There are also three 'interns', returning Caux Scholars who are back to help this time round. Two Serbs and a Croat who had already met in the 'Foundations for Freedom' course in Britain warmly greeted each other on meeting again in Caux. They are a more mature group than in some previous years, they share a seriousness of intent, and are already well integrated into the life of the house.

As the setting sun flooded into the hall, we started the summer conferences on Saturday evening, with a humorous presentation in

words and mime of the translation equipment, lead by three young Poles and an Anglo-Scot. An explanation is clearly needed, since as well as the usual English, French and German, there is translation into Russian, Croatian and Portuguese, and yesterday afternoon's main meeting was mainly in Russian. The theme of this first session is 'Unity with diversity - a consultation on the European continent'.

The diversity is certainly with us, and we're working on the unity, with Europeans from Portugal to the Urals, from Albania, Russia, Romania, and former Yugoslavia. A Romanian-speaking member of parliament from the Ukraine explains that he speaks to his wife in Russian. The MP should have been playing for his parliamentary soccer team against the Russian Parliament in Moscow, instead of speaking from the Caux platform. (Stop press: the Ukrainian Parliament lost to the Russians 2-1, doubtless fatally weakened by the absence of their representative in Caux!). Chairman of the sub-committee on inter-ethnic affairs in the Human Rights Committee, he tells how his grandfathers fought on opposite sides in the last war: his own life and history is a book on the theme of unity and diversity. Dr. Dessloch, the representative to the European Union in Brussels of the Bavarian government, passionately insists on the need for democracy to have ethical and religious foundations if it is to survive. Caux is a magic place, says one of the young Poles, where we create one big community together. Eight British students are introduced. Two days ago, none of them had ever served here, nor even set foot in the house, and now they are leading service teams - a repeat of last years venture, with selected volunteers, sponsored by MRA in Britain.

Europe is a puzzle, and at the end of the opening session, we were all invited to pick up pieces of a giant jigsaw puzzle, work out where our piece fits in, and learn all we can about our piece before putting it back into its place in the whole - a well thought-out symbol for the coming week. 'Is there a limit to the right to diversity?' we were asked at yesterday's main session. Our ingrained views as members of majorities or minorities are going to be sorely challenged, I suspect.

Yesterday, Sunday, was our first full day of conference. It started for me with the refreshment of a communion service in the Protestant chapel, surrounded by the familiar angels in wood and stained glass, and the altar carvings of meals: the last supper with Christ and His disciples, the feeding of the 5000, and the wedding in Cana, turning the water into wine. Surely it is not by chance that meetings over meals seem to play such an important part in the life of Caux? The day drew to its close with a concert in the bay window, with the lake a pot of molten gold in the falling sun, and the three young men musicians, classical guitar, violin and cello, competing with a bird in the tree outside the open window.

As you think for the summer here and perhaps carry us in your prayers, you are perhaps part of that angel host for us.

Expectant greetings from,

Andrew.