

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

Caux, 1st July, 1996

Dear friends,

Another summer in Caux begins, and not just any summer. This jubilee anniversary that many have been planning, thinking, praying for is with us at last. We're off. At one of our meetings months ago, someone likened the summer in Caux to a garden, where different flowers were going to grow, a different flower for each event, different colours and scents; some would only last a day or two, some would last for longer. In only two days, we already have quite a bouquet. I hardly know what to say; the impressions have been coming to strong and fast. I feel I need a week to digest and savour these first two days!

The preparations have blurred into one another in the accelerating run-up to the start, the house filling up day by day, friends old and new arriving to take up service in this 'learning community', the different work teams getting up to speed, the different pieces of the puzzle coming together, the areas of chaos and disorder being moved from one place to another, and then vanishing, the smell of paint, work, work. But a cheerful atmosphere, with little sense of panic or pressure. And with all, in their different ways preparing the soil for these first flowers, not just through their labours, but through the way we live and are.

My view will probably be even more limited and partial than in previous years, since more will happen, and I can still only be in one place at a time. My place has been with the younger team who for many months now have been preparing the Caux Expo in Oslo, London, Paris, North Wales, as well as Caux, Luzern and Geneva. At last, we've come to an end of faxes - many timed in the middle of the night, since that was when some of the key team-members were free from their jobs - and 'phone calls. We were all in the same place, and could work together on the final stages of putting together all that had been prepared. I don't think I've ever had such an experience of cheerful teamwork. Local firms worked to impossible deadlines to help us to finish on time. I collected the last texts from a printer at 18.30 on Friday night - he was re-doing the work of another firm that hadn't come up to his own high standards. We even managed to finish the final cleaning up one hour before the opening so that we could shower and change.

The weather has smiled on us at the important times. The forecast for the weekend was wet, and on Saturday the clouds over the Rochers de Naye were of the blackest and most threatening. The opening of the Expo was scheduled to take place outside, in front of the bookshop. As a jazz band played and we all gathered, including many of the paid staff who've been involved in the preparation work over the months, the clouds started to shred, and patches of gold appeared on the lake. Edgar Styger, a dynamic local figure and the director of the Caux railway and the other line from Montreux, the MOB, linked the opening with the centenary of the mountain garden at the top of the Rochers de Naye, a meeting of worlds, at the watershed between the North Sea and the Mediterranean, with flowers from mountain regions of the world, from the Alps and the Andes to the Himalayas. They had marked the centenary with a Cross and a Buddhist stupa, and for him this was a happy symbol of Caux's openness to the

world. Marcel Grandy thanked the workers, the local firms, the creative team and the sponsors who have so far contributed over 100,000 francs for the venture.

I can only say that the exhibition has made a great impression, seems to match all the expectations put in it. The hallmark of the first three 'flowers' of this summer bouquet has been an entirely new open door to the region. Neighbours from the village, the families of our workers, people from Montreux, have come, stayed, enjoyed themselves, learned something new about the history of the house and its present purpose, been touched. Some stayed on for supper and the evening of jazz (with some dancing) in the great hall after the Expo opening.

Then yesterday (my wife Eliane's birthday), a special train and a stream of cars took most of those in Caux down to the 13th century church of St. Vincent, the parish church of Montreux that has so many links and memories with the world community of MRA. There was a perfect, profoundly stirring service in three parts: humiliation and repentance, praise and thanksgiving, and finally dedication to 'persevere in God's plan'. And again the weather smiled on us. A team had worked for weeks to weave together a rich tapestry of Bible texts, prayers in different languages from a large number of people, music and most unexpectedly percussion, a drummer. The vice-president of the parish council started with a brief history; it was a generous and whole-hearted gesture of unity with them in the community of believers. Jean Piguët, in his sermon, also spoke in gardening terms: 'We cannot possibly number all the servants of God - planters, cultivators, gardeners and workmates... We are just the garden which he cultivates. So we need to open our eyes, look at things differently, open our hearts wider to notice the first green shoots of spring, sometimes in our garden, sometimes in our neighbour's field... The fruits of the harvest are already within sight.'

The congregation were all invited to Caux for lunch, and some 30 plus came, stayed on to visit the Expo. Others came for tea, including a bus from the home where Philippe and Hélène Mottu live, and a large part of the extended Mottu clan. The third great flower was Philippe Mottu's inaugural Jubilee Lecture, a masterly view from a historian and a participant in the events that held the packed hall spellbound for well over an hour and brought everyone to their feet in spontaneous applause at its close. Mottu, seated at a table set with roses and a microphone, and speaking with great force and conviction, set the creation of Caux in the context of Swiss and European developments, and placed it as the culmination of a long process of development of a Swiss team. Before he spoke, the Montreux singers, in national costume, sang - they gave a concert after supper - and since they were sitting on the platform beside Mottu, we could read on the faces of these local people the growing interest and fascination in what he had to say. The Gilomen family presented him with flowers at the end, and then moved on to Dorli Hahnloser and her son, sitting in the front row, and presented her with flowers too. Many of the founders are here, and many born since 1946 too.

Two full-page articles have appeared, both 100% positive, in two of the most important Swiss papers - *Der Bund*, the serious paper of the federal capital in Bern, and *24 Heures*, the largest circulation daily in the French-speaking part of the country. The local Montreux paper has a full report on the opening of the Caux Expo this morning, and there were also two pages in the magazine section of yesterday's *The Independent on Sunday* (London). One national and one local radio programme should go out in the next few days, and this morning's local paper will carry a report on the opening of the Expo. All this before official opening tomorrow and the press conference that precedes it!

Warm greetings from a chilly Caux where the rain is coming at last,

Andrew Stallybrass