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for Moral Re-Armament

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Dear friends,

Only one week since the first letter, it hardly seems possible, so much seems to have happened. Two more of the exotic 'flowers', the events of the summer have come and gone, flowered and scattered their seeds. The numbers have dropped slightly, with more departures than arrivals; the first 'hump' is behind, the next is just ahead. Many commented on the special joy of doing big events all together, when we all feel that we are playing our different parts in some great venture. Last Monday we were in the thick of preparations for the official opening ceremony. Then the Tuesday started with a press conference, plus a major four-column article in the foreign pages of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, one of the journalistic monuments of the continent, and a two thirds of a page interview with Catherine Guisan Dickinson in *Le Nouveau Quotidien*, the one daily that speaks to all of the Suisse romande. (We also received copies of two important articles in the Moscow press.) In the afternoon a German couple came to visit the house, prompted by a programme that they'd heard on the radio, and the Spanish-language service of the Swiss International Radio has recorded two interviews... So Caux is speaking to a wider public.

Then the chauffeur-driven black Mercedes started to arrive, some twenty ambassadors from Geneva and Bern, from Cuba to China, and the diplomats of several countries more. The Swiss ambassador, head of protocol in Bern, helped to receive them with his wife, but he said, 'Do it the Caux way; we're interested in Caux for itself.' The hall was filled to bursting, with friends from Montreux and the village, Church authorities - including two friends of mine from Geneva, quite bowled over by the whole occasion. The Papal Nuncio bowed his head in the front row. 'I was praying for you, not sleeping,' he said afterwards, 'I could see that some of you were quite nervous.' The full page headline in the local paper in Montreux on Wednesday morning summed it up: 'The recognition (or it could mean gratitude) of official Switzerland - 50 years of Moral Re-Armament in Caux'. The Mayor of Montreux, a member of the Vaud Cantonal Government, the President of the Parliament and first citizen of the country, the Chancellor of the Confederation, on behalf of the Federal Government, all brought their own evaluations and convictions, far from the official speeches I confess I rather cynically expected and feared (see the enclosed press release).

Some of the many Swiss who make Caux possible were interviewed; a Socialist Member of Parliament from Vevey spoke of his view from home towards Caux, and his different touches with the idea. 'The sight of you up here doesn't leave me in peace,' he said. A Russian journalist spoke of his efforts to become a good Soviet man, and his attacks on MRA and Caux after his first visit, some twenty years ago now. But something in the spirit of the place had touched him deeply, and he'd come back. An American played the saxophone and piano; Vijayalakshmi Subramaniam danced expressively to a text recounting some of the history of the house. Sylvie Soderlund sang the Prayer of St. Francis, and led us into a magical moment of quiet with all

the distinguished audience. The Vice-President of the Red Cross wanted to know how we take decisions in MRA. The President of the Cantonal parliament wanted to know if 'this time of quiet is at the heart of MRA?' A vast and sumptuous buffet dominated the dining room; tables had been planned for most of the guests. Over lunch, the One of my most critical friends said, 'This was almost perfect.' Another critical friend repeated the same words, without the 'almost'.

A word of warning to those who may be coming to Caux later, of those who like weather reports: we haven't seen much sign of summer so far. The heating is on in the house, many of us wish we had brought warmer clothes, it seems to have rained non-stop for the last 24 hours (fortunately being so high in the mountains, we don't yet need to start thinking of ark-building).

My personal watch-words have been: 'fragility, vulnerability and weakness'; I am called to live a Christ-like life, and He wasn't strong, dominating, certain. I am sure that there is a profound spiritual truth in the phrase that was coined for this summer of 'a learning community'. We do our best to make everything work out as it should, but Caux is not meant to be a well-oiled, expert machine, but rather a community of learners. God has been very generous with His gifts so far, yet He has sent reminders of our fragility and weakness with the deaths of several cherished friends: Michael Hutchinson, Peter Hintzen, Bob Riddell. And a very precious moment for me was a visit a few of us made to Glion, to the graves of Marie-Claude, Serge and Regula Borel.

The second flower, 'Europe at the Crossroads', is perhaps linked with this sense that closeness to God is not a function of our economic or political strength. The spiritual elements have been many, and doubtless necessary in this un-easy process of understanding ourselves and others and building unity across our continent. On three consecutive mornings, there were panel-discussions on 'Europe needs to deepen its spiritual roots', 'Each cultural, social and religious group has its own unique contribution to make', and 'Each person has a part to play'. Three of the British student volunteers leading service shifts were among the participants, on this their first experience of Caux and MRA. Martin Dent, one of the initiators of the Jubilee 2000 campaign for the remission of Third World debt, put the relationship between Europe and the poorer part of the world high on the list of our concerns. Several from the European leadership of the evangelical movement *Youth with a Mission* have taken part. The Catholic Bishop of Trier (in Germany) spoke of the challenge of building community. The Russian philosopher and orientalist Grigori Pomerants reminded us of the fundamental hierarchy of spiritual values. He called for dialogue between people from different cultures and religions, and a culture of silence as the twin arms against post-modernism, 'where there is neither up nor down, good nor bad'. Two evenings were taken by one of those responsible for the European Churches office in Brussels, with images, historical maps showing our Euro-centric view of the world, and how our way of looking at the world is shaped by our beliefs. The daily 7.30 meetings, and the daily times of prayer just before supper in the Catholic chapel have also helped to maintain the sense of unity.

Spare a thought for the Secretariat and the Accommodation team. They are trying to deal with the practical consequences of Caux's popularity. There are now twelve nights when the house-count will go over the 600 mark (the highest is 642) - and we reckon that the house is full when we are 550. So bear with us! One last piece of news: the Caux World Wide Web page on the Internet is at last fully operational, at the address <http://www.caux.ch/>

Expectant greetings from a cold, wet Caux, Andrew Stallybrass