

# International Conference Centre

Tel. +41 21 962 9111

Fax +41 21 962 9355

email:

caux@iprolink.ch

## for Moral Re-Armament

Mountain House

Rue du Panorama

CH - 1824 Caux

Switzerland

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Dear friends,

A hint of dawn reveals the dark blue-grey undersides of heavy rain-clouds: another cooler, wetter spell is on us. It arrived with a theatrical entrance just after supper on Saturday evening, after the opening of the new event, the 'Agenda for Reconciliation'. There was thunder and lightening, the usual sweep of wind across the lake and up the hill - and then for some 15 minutes, all the lights were out. Within a few minutes, the wash-up team were cheerfully partying around their silent machine. There was no evening programme, so people could talk quietly in the dark!

The Mufti from Zagreb, the President of the Muslim communities of Croatia is with us. Mohammed Masmoudi from Tunisia, back after 42 years, with his son. A Buddhist patriarch and many others from Cambodia, including an advisor to the Prime Minister. 20 from Lebanon; 18 African countries are represented; and there are over 50 Japanese. I was moved to hear one of our Japanese friends say that this group might have as much impact on the life of their country as the first big delegation in 1950. The President of the El Salvador parliament, and another woman MP, a member of the South Tyrol government, the Belgian Minister for Development, who was president of *Médecins sans frontières*...

The Americas have handed over the keys of the house to 'the most of the world', those from the Pacific, Asia and Africa, who are going to carry these final weeks of this epic summer. I go to the dictionary. The Shorter Oxford suggests: 'epic - pertaining to that kind of narrative poetry which celebrates the achievements of some heroic personage of history or tradition (1589)'. The Webster adds, 'undertaken on a grand scale'. I certainly honour the persistent conviction of Yukihiisa Fujita that has led to this 'Agenda for Reconciliation' time, and his conviction that Caux must reach the decision-makers.

So we're into another monster period, the largest yet, with over 650 people in the house for meals at the peak, and many staying in the village or in Glion, with every team and sinew stretched, with long days and shorter nights, with black ambassadorial diplomatic Mercedes at the entrance, with translators squatting our office trying to prepare texts in time, borrowing our computers. Perhaps the highlight was the arrival of five Japanese cooks yesterday, and the maître d'hôtel at the Geneva diplomatic mission, sent by the ambassador, who arrived to prepare a banquet for 110 in the small dining room, and give a Japanese touch to all the rest of the conference, including the press team eating late in the cafeteria after the third press release of the day.

And many elsewhere have been hearing about Caux. There has been a two-minute item on the main Swiss-German evening TV news, two more radio interviews - the second included Cornelio Sommaruga, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who instantly recalled that the

journalist had made his very first interview with him 15 years before, and that the tape-recorder hadn't worked, and they'd had to redo it. He mentioned his family links, going back to his mother who had come to Caux in the early years, but said that in his present function, he valued MRA's quiet but effective efforts to link together people of deep conviction to work for a better world. The Japanese national TV NHK reported on their main evening news the opening of the 'agenda' event in Caux; a TV crew from the German-language service of the Italian RAI in South Tyrol have been and gone; two more Japanese TV crews are at work. And the journalist still asks me: 'Why don't we hear more about MRA and Caux? Are you deliberately trying to keep a lower profile?'

But all this has been the last two or three days, and I have to tear my heart and mind back to last Monday, to the landmark of the Chief Rabbi's Jubilee Lecture. A full text is available on request. The Jewish faith, with all its riches, has been present as never before this summer, present too with all its humour, reminding us Christians of all that we owe of our faith to our elder brothers. Rarely has such a talk provoked so much discussion and reflection. I was at a meeting on the terrace of the Swiss-South Africa solidarity group of the French-speaking Protestant churches, and the black South African minister they had come to meet started with a passionate tribute to MRA and Caux, and a summary of the Rabbi's message. I've promised the full text to another church minister friend who couldn't come, but who said he'd like to preach on the thought that the Jewish leader gave us, of a fresh covenant with God, in the place of our human contracts. The Rabbi had been struck with the beauty of the people he met, and not just the beauty of the place, which he part-expected. At the start of his talk he added: 'The truth is that when you change yourself you begin to change the world. That is what is happening here and what has been happening here for 50 years, and I have seen how it happens in the simplest and yet most miraculous way.' And the change begins as we listen. The famous Jewish prayer, 'Hear O Israel' should be better translated 'listen'. He reminded us that we owe the very concept of the Jubilee to the Jews.

At the closing meeting, 23 people spoke in 30 minutes, during an 'open sharing' time, in an amazing mosaic. The Rabbi, and Frank Field, the British MP, both commented on the quality of the younger people they'd met here. Field, who stayed for the full 4½ days of the previous event, said as he left, 'The stars of Caux are the women over 60: without them, Caux would not be possible.' He added, 'I've had a lot of scar tissue healed. MRA is a single-issue movement: people.'

Perhaps the power-house of these full and stretching days have been the 7.30 (now 7.15) team meetings, with unhurried time for some spiritual meditation, from the riches of our different faiths, as well as the host of planning and practical points. And as well as all the words, the chances to relax to music: an evening of poetry and music with Michael and Penelope Thwaites, a celebration of the Philippines in dance and song, from a group brought by Genis Ibot who was in *Song of Asia*, at his expense, as his contribution to the Jubilee. He spoke movingly from the stage about what the quiet listening that MRA had taught him had brought to his life, and he invited his audience, including the Consul General from Geneva, to be quiet for a moment. Last night, the British artist Gillian Humphreys presented a superb evening of music, singing and poetry, with five other artists, entitled 'The still voice sings within', specially conceived for the Caux Jubilee.

Damp and cool greetings from a very full and busy Caux,

Andrew Stallybrass