

## Centre de Rencontres Internationales

BUREAU: 1, RUE DE VAREMBÉ  
CASE POSTALE 3  
CH-1211 GENÈVE 20  
TÉL. 022 / 733 09 20  
FAX: 022 / 733 02 67

pour le Réarmement moral

# CAUX

CENTRE DE RENCONTRES  
RUE DU PANORAMA  
CH-1824 CAUX  
TÉL: 021 / 962 91 11  
FAX: 021 / 962 93 55

Caux, 14/8/00

Dear Friends,

Greetings once again from Caux, where the sun is shining, and there is a lovely view of the mountains on the other side of the lake. After a summer beset by miserable weather, we have finally had a full week of brilliant sunshine and hot weather, to the relief of everyone.

This past week began with the closing session of the 'Arts in Perspective' conference, whose hectic but inspiring character was summed up very well by Andrew last time, and just yesterday we finally embarked upon the 'Agenda for Reconciliation' week, more of which later.

In between these two bookends, however, was situated a very valuable time of meditation on 'Life-Faith-Fellowship', which for me personally came as great refreshment after the whirlwind that was the previous session. We were treated to inspiring talks each morning on the topics of "Silence and the Art of Listening", "Knowing Oneself", and "Daring to Tackle the Needs of the World Around Us". These morning sessions were followed in the afternoon by times of meditation and quiet conducted by Jean Brown, with the help of objects as diverse as onions, rubbish bins, and watering cans. Many people stayed for some time after these meditations ended, in order to share what they had felt.

In addition to the morning and afternoon meetings, the time spent in sharing groups each day was universally of an exceptional standard. As an initially slightly reluctant facilitator, I can honestly say that I have never been in such an inspiring group, made up of people of different religions, nations and generations, where we engaged in some truly profound fellowship, but respect for confidentiality requires that I say no more!

On Friday the Caux Lecture was given by Metropolitan Damaskinos, the Geneva representative of the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew I, and a major figure in the Orthodox Church. It was a piercing experience listening to his dissatisfaction towards the Western world, particularly after the promise which the fall of the Berlin Wall seemed to have delivered. His coming to speak at Caux is another step in relations between MRA and the Orthodox Church, which we pray will continue to be fruitful in years to come.

In keeping with the spirit of the conference, a number of young people decided to have an evening time of meditation, worship and prayer up in the Catholic church, which lasted for around an hour. In the midst of the often very hectic life we younger (and older!) people often lead here in Caux, it was a very simple yet inspiring time.

In the closing session many people shared how their lives had been touched over the previous three days. A young lady from India spoke of being able to finally let go of her inner guilt and find true peace. A former Somali diplomat stated that 'Life-Faith-Fellowship' was the bottom line of MRA, 'like a fountain with ever healthy water' flowing from it. There were many people, especially those from the younger generation, who stated that the conference was one of the best in Caux for the last few years. There is much demand for a similar session next year, but on an expanded basis, and not limited to just three days.

After its official end, the spirit of the conference continued on Sunday with a half hour multi-faith prayer meeting on the lawn, in which Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam and Christianity were all represented. Around 100 people attended, and the time closed with a 'Millennium Resolution' written by Imam Sajid from Britain, which had been previously used in 'A Shared Act of Reflection and Commitment by the Faith Communities on the United Kingdom'.

This week also saw the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual MRA Boards meeting, where 22 of the 40 known MRA Boards from around the world met to talk on Saturday. There have also already been preliminary discussions into the Caux programme for next year.

The 'Agenda for Reconciliation' only started yesterday evening, but already one can feel a definite shift in the spirit of the house. The European domination of the house has definitely been challenged with groups from Japan, Africa, Papua New Guinea, Jamaica, and Lebanon to mention but a few. There are currently over 500 people registered as part of this week, yet allocation have by some minor miracle managed to accommodate virtually everyone up here in Caux. It will be interesting to see whether the house will finally explode at some point during the next week!

In the opening session last night, Tsutomu Hata MP, Secretary General of the Democratic Party of Japan, and a former Prime Minister of Japan cited examples of reconciliation such as the return of democracy to East Timor and the recent thaw in relations between North and South Korea, and stressed that 'True peace cannot be achieved without reconciliation'. He apologized openly for Japan's part in the Korean peninsula's problems.

Friday also saw the end of the Caux Scholars Program, although of the 19 involved three of them have stayed on to assist with and attend the 'Agenda for Reconciliation.' This year's group have been more varied than ever; they have learnt a lot and in turn brought a lot to the general spirit here in Caux. I for one will miss the highly energetic yet highly enjoyable volleyball games we regularly played.

Despite only starting yesterday, it seems as though the 'Agenda for Reconciliation' has been going for at least a week already. With the sheer variety of people here, from such a varied range of nationalities, cultures, religions and positions, this final week of the summer we have just embarked on promises to be an utterly compelling one. I'm afraid you, like all of us here, will have to wait until this time next week to find out what happens.

Yours sincerely,

John Everington