

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Keith R Maddock (2005), *Living Truth - A Spiritual Portrait of Pierre Ceresole*, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 379, 35 pp with an comprehensive bibliography, ISBN 0-87575-379-X.

In 1920 Pierre Ceresole with Hubert Parris, then the Assistant Secretary of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, initiated what became Service Civil International, SCI, through running an international work camp at Esnes-Verdun to help heal the ravages of the First World War. In 2005 SCI is running about 700 projects in 40 countries with thousands of volunteers. Its vision is that of Ceresole's born in Lausanne 1879, died in Geneva 1945: *a world of peace, social justice and sustainable development, where all people live together with mutual respect and without recourse to any form of violence to solve conflict. Its mission is to promote peace and intercultural understanding through volunteering and international voluntary projects.*

Keith Maddock is a Canadian Friend who finds that his spiritual journey is akin to that of Ceresole, emphasising that the divine voice speaks to us directly and that physical labour can be a healing corporate spiritual activity. His brief account of Ceresole's life and witness is drawn from manuscripts held in the Peace Collection within the library of Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania, a Collection with an excellent website (swarthmore.edu/library/peace).

Like the UN's first General Secretary Dag Hammarskjöld's vignettes in his posthumous *Markings*,¹ Ceresole mainly left only jottings in notebooks kept in his back pocket. These were published in Neuchatel by the Swiss publisher *La Baconniere* in 1950 with the title of *Vivre sa Vérité: Camets de Route*. An English translation of some of these jottings was made by John W Harvey, when he was Professor of Philosophy at Leeds University and President of SCI, and Christina Yates that was published in 1954 by The Bannisdale Press with the title *For Peace and Truth: from the Notebooks of Pierre Ceresole*. Maddock uses a liberal set of quotations from this book as brush strokes for his spiritual portrait of Ceresole.

Ceresole like Daniel Berrigan in our times was an ardent resistor against militarism and the organs of state power that supported it. As Berrigan points out in his commentary on Daniel,² state power like

King Nebuchadnezzar is ordained with gold at its head but its feet are merely a mixture of clay and iron. Without the power of truth at its feet the state will fall, and that power is best wielded by an international group of civilians professing nonviolence. Such resistance to militarism led both Ceresole and Berrigan to prison in which their spirits flourished. Maddock opens his narrative with a lyrical passage of Ceresole's about his envy of the liberty, courage and defiance of swallows that he spied from his prison window.

I was briefly a member of Swiss Yearly Meeting in the early 1960's and found that Ceresole was a legend amongst its elder members: some like Edmund Privat and Madelaine Jéquier knew him personally, and had been long term volunteers in war stricken regions. At the first Swiss Yearly Meeting in Bern in 1934 twenty two of the fifty present had served in SCI projects and nine of the men had been CO's.

Ceresole spent many years studying mechanical engineering and philosophy but soon gave up teaching in order to travel the world taking up diverse labouring jobs to become better acquainted with the human condition. Returning to Switzerland from Japan as the First World War broke out, he was appalled by the hypocrisy of the Churches in their patriotic support of violence and their indifference to the sufferings inflicted on the enemy.

Maddock succeeds in describing the essence of a life's journey in as short a publication as a Pendle Hill pamphlet. He kindles the reader's interest in a person as dedicated to nonviolence and alternatives to militarism as Ceresole.

Ceresole's consistent endeavour was to transform the enemy into friend: this led him to make several clandestine journeys across the Swiss-German border particularly during the Nazi period against the wish of both governments in an attempt to form an international civil society against war. For this he was imprisoned by both governments as he was by the Swiss when he supported a Swiss soldier who discharged himself from the army in 1915 on becoming a CO. In 1961 when I asked to visit a Swiss CO who had been thrown into jail in Geneva, I was told that if I persisted I would be thrown out of Switzerland. Patriotism was still then equated with military duty. There was not then as there is now provision for an alternative civilian duty so strongly advocated by Ceresole. He was continually

punished for refusing to pay a Swiss military exemption tax, and like William Penn his renunciation of the military estranged him from his father who not only was a colonel in this Swiss army but also served for some time as President of the Swiss Confederation. However Ceresole's brother, although he also was an army colonel, assisted him later in some of his work camps.

The author has made good use of the Ceresole manuscripts in Swarthmore's library but he was probably not acquainted with the conservatism of Swiss society that made it harder for Ceresole to oppose its patriotism and militarism than it would have been in Canada. I feel also that he laces his narrative too much with one of Quakers' most hackneyed phrases: speaking truth to power, one that Ceresole probably would have eschewed.

Maddock perceives his pamphlet as a spiritual portrait in three senses. He resonates with the spirit and energy of Ceresole's jottings. Through them he paints a holistic perspective of what in some of them seemed complex and enigmatic. Thirdly Maddock saw himself as a portrait painter revealing Ceresole's affirmation of the eternal in everyday experience whether of truth and power, or of the majesty of mountains and the wonder of birds that Ceresole so much admired.

Maddock's engaging but tantalising brief view of Ceresole's commitment to alternatives to all violence and his idiosyncratic theology spurred in me to delve again into those jottings from his notebooks published by The Bannisdale Press in London in 1964. I brought my copy in Australia in 1968. May they soon be republished.

- ¹ Dag Hammarskjöld (1964), *Markings*, Faber & Faber.
- ² Daniel Berrigan (1998), *Daniel - Under the Siege of the Divine*, Plough Publishing House.

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