

# Centre de Rencontres Internationales

BUREAU: 1, RUE DE VAREMBÉ  
CASE POSTALE 3  
CH-1211 GENEVE 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

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Dear friends,

The first rays of the rising sun hit the Grammont, the mountain opposite Caux, painting just the top almost orange. The air is still and the lake like glass. I marvel, yet again, at this incredible view, one of the great sights of the world. I try to gather my bleary thoughts, scrape away the mental rust: have I not lost the habit of writing these weekly letters from Caux to include you in the life of this extraordinary, privileged place? But I am back on duty after my sabbatical, and after passing my exams. And didn't I, like much of the household, stay up to watch the World Cup Final, and to celebrate France's victory over Brazil? The cheerful crowd in the 'stands' in front of the big video screen was mixed - good humoured French and Latin Americans sat side by side, and there were no outbreaks of hooliganism reported!

The 'warm-up week' started just over a week ago, the house slowly filling up. In fact we had some colder days, the rain and the cooler mountain air forcing some to beg sweaters from Emina Carrard's reserves. The mild winter and the early spring though mean that nature is at its best to welcome us: the roses are already in full and glorious flower, and on my first fitness run up the mountain I note that the wild orchids are already past their prime and fading. Summer is well advanced. A car-load of 4 Ukrainians had driven the 2'000 kilometres from Lviv to Caux to help with the change-over from the hotel school. Many new, younger faces mix with the faithful regulars - co-workers from Britain, two trainee cooks from the hotel school in Mountain House when we're not here, one a Chinese from Singapore, the other a Jamaican woman living in the Gulf with her family. A young Swiss, after hearing a programme on the radio and an exchange of letters with the Luzern MRA office has come to help all through the summer at the reception desk. A dynamic 'Young people's liaison team' have set up the Caux café, including young and old in games and community-building. We are already a microcosm of the world.

The normal, usual process of preparing, cleaning, re-organising, repairing has been cheerfully carried forward with grace, patience and lots of hard work. The 'someone-should-have-done-something-syndrome' gives way to 'what I can do'. Some of the first arrivals had trouble getting into the house - the doorbells weren't working, and all were too busy at work for us to be able to have a reception team at the main door. Another potentially major problem with the coffee machine - a fuse has blown and it's impossible to keep the coffee really hot... Then just before the first church service in the Protestant chapel, in a panic we discover that the organ will only produce a hiss and a faint click of keys - a cleaner has tidied away the pipe that blows the air into the instrument!

This seems set to be an important change-over year. A turning of the page, a testing and searching for new ways of doing. Several familiar friends are not here, for reasons of age and health. Others, like Trüdi Trussel, a Caux institution at the internal post office, have already announced that this is their last summer at their post. She has moved from Caux down to a home below, with a view up to Caux. It will require an almost spiritual discipline for some not to rush in to fill every hole, every need that becomes apparent, to do all that *must* be done, but rather to allow all to see and experience that this enterprise depends on each one's sense of responsibility, is a living, learning community and not an organisation. God seems to have fresh people and fresh ways in preparation.

In the midst of the preparations, a local lady who has heard something about Caux on the radio

rings up. She organises what is called 'holiday passport' outings for local school children, and would like to add a visit to the old Caux-Palace hotel to the list of choices. A few days later she arrives with a friend and a group of 15 children, to visit the 'CAUX expo' and the house. The group who visited the house with me will not quickly forget being locked out on the roof outside room 728 in the end tower, and having to make their way down and up ladders to the central tower, and climbing back into the house through a hatch and down another ladder!

So at last on Saturday morning, we held the last 'warm-up' meeting in the great hall, testing out the translation system with the newly arrived trainee interpreters. Then in the afternoon, the opening of the summer conferences : 'A learning community, learning from the past, from others, and a search for values-centres leadership, a Swiss contribution,' with a panel of Swiss and non-Swiss, younger and older, leading us into some of the questions that Switzerland - and other nations - are being forced to ask themselves. 'The past keeps bubbling up around you,' said a young American, 'it's not going to disappear, but you can use it to discover more about yourself and about the world around you.' It's been short, all too short, intense and deep and yet quite relaxed. There wasn't enough wind to fly my kite - one of my hobbies - but I've felt a gentle breeze of the Spirit.

The evening brought a lively multi-media presentation of the life and work of the Genevese doctor Paul Tournier, whose life-work sprang from his encounter with Frank Buchman and the Oxford Group - this year marks the centenary of his birth. A Swiss psychiatrist, who wrote his thesis on Tournier and Viktor Frankl, the Vienna psychiatrist, and who organised a centenary congress in May came specially and spoke. Charles Piguet, who had also been invited to speak at this congress told how he'd expected to meet serious old disciples, and been surprised to discover that Tournier's Christian approach, based on listening, on respect for the patient and the doctor's readiness to share from his own experience, continues to inspire fresh generations of practitioners.

Yesterday, Sunday, brought discussions in small community groups, starting from a questionnaire that all received on arrival. I can only speak for my group : we had some of the best meetings I've experienced. Half Swiss, half non-Swiss, we started with a round by the non-Swiss. All felt that the questions raised were interesting and valid for them and their countries. Then the Swiss, from different generations, in turn shared their pain and their shame at the revelations from the war period of Nazi gold, of Jews turned back at the frontier, and the more recent refusal of the banks to take seriously the question of the dormant accounts. A young German translator helped us to communicate, but after a while asked if she could say what she felt. She repeated in the open afternoon session what had moved us all so much in the morning: her pride in being German, but a pride hard won. She told what it meant as a child of 14 to spend a year at school studying the Nazi period, ending with a compulsory visit to the death camps, films and photographs, and first reaction that she wanted to be anything but German. Her grandparents had been part of this?! But the lesson of the past to learn is the evil that people have done, and people can do evil again - the Germans can have a precious message for others when they have digested their experience. It was one of the most human, moving and mature expressions of identification with one's nation that I have ever heard.

Yesterday morning, after the traditional black cherry jam on our special Sunday bread, many of us hurried up to the Protestant chapel for a launching service with a minister from the Montreux parish, a warm-hearted friend, who included prayers for all those who will be making their way to Caux this summer. And certainly we will welcome your prayers through this summer. We'll try to commune in prayer with you, with the many friends who cannot be here in person, but whose thoughts wing this way. We have a final session this morning of this first session, and then the house is already filling with another clientele coming for the Caux Conference for Business and Industry, which opens this afternoon.

Warm regards, Andrew Stallybrass