

# Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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pour le Réarmement moral

# CAUX

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Caux, 24/07/99

Dear friends,

It is early, but the pale pink of the rising sun is already touching the mountain ranges on the other side of the lake. Below us, the lake is hidden under a layer of cloud, or is it mist? The horizon, where the Jura must be, is the colours of the skin of a peach, and seems to have something of the same furry texture. I must confess that I am cheating - it's not yet Monday. But then I'm off home today, to meet up with my brother from the States, and then we're off to the mountains, the Bernese Alps, for our now traditional break and male bonding time. We'll also see the *Fête des Vignerons* with Eliane, my wife, and my sister-in-law, the popular, open-air mass festival, music and stage production in Vevey that is only produced every 25 years or so to celebrate the vineyards, wine, and those who work there. Frank Buchman took a large party to a previous festival, and 25 lucky participants are going to be able to see it, despite all the thousands of tickets sold out ages ago.

John Everington has accepted to produce a letter while I'm away - I'm back for the last two sessions. If you've been visiting the Caux Web site, you'll have seen some of the fruits of his writing already. He's been a very welcome reinforcement to 'the press team', and we've had a busy week, with several stories. This has been a good week for learning initials and abbreviations. The CCBI, the Caux Conference for Business and Industry closes today, and the CRT, the Caux Round Table. The CRT started here in 1986, and has met here every summer since. This year, forty senior executives are taking part, including four participants from the PriceWaterhouseCoopers, the accountancy giant, who are here to support the development of benchmarks for the implementation of the Caux Round Table *Business Principles* - the best-known product of the CRT. The CSP is also well under way (the Caux Scholars Program) - and that goes on - with 21 students from 11 countries, studying 'conflict transformation'. So it's even more ludicrous for one person to try to give some fly's-eye view of all that's going on. It would have to be a fly with a seriously split personality! The CRT has been going on under my feet, in the Lake Room, as the end of the old small dining room is now called. But the organisers have been working all hours in the office next to mine, and have been working the photocopier very hard, producing all their documentation. A senior, faithful participant of the CRT said that this year's meeting was the best he's ever attended.

Then the CCBI participants had to choose between five forums (fora?). I was with the ICF, the International Communications Forum, meeting with some sixty people in the Theatre Foyer, on 'Formation of the Media for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century', with senior trainers and professors from Denmark, the Czech Republic and South Africa. Quite an array of professionals, many here for the first time. Then there's the Junior Round Table, organised by young business professionals; an International Business Ethics Forum; another on 'Business values in the West and the new market economies'; and 'Full employment - myth or reality?'

In all honesty, I can say that I was quite happy to stay with my cooking shift, and stop rushing from one thing to another. To stay in one place, and to stick with one job. Sign language is a great help, when you find yourself cooking with a bridge engineer from Russia and a young Colombian, and there's no language that you can communicate in! It is stretching, it always is the most demanding time, with so many different things going on, and the eternal stretch between the meetings and the practical work. But I've been really moved to see older, retired colleagues working hard on service teams, helping at the wash-up, under the enthusiastic and expert leadership of young Moldovans, and others. All with a sense that these times are as important when it comes to building a spirit of community.

Many have come with their families, so there are quite a number of smaller children, and even if the CRT is still largely a male bastion, and older, there are large numbers of younger people. All ages and generations mix nightly in the Caux Café on the third floor. We have

also all been meeting together to start the day in the Great Hall, with the *Heart of the Matter*, which has turned out to be a series of short meditations of great depth and impact. There's a strong chance that you'll find each of them in our publications at some not-too-distant point. Paul Gundersen from Finland gave us some reflections from his lifetime experience of industry - and we could discover more in the new book he has just brought out, *Incorrigibly Independent - a Finnish Life*. He spoke in part for the group of Russians present, as one who had fought the Russians during World War II. Jealousy and cynicism are the number one killers of vision, he says. He's talking of business, but we can all apply such thoughts to ourselves, whatever our area of activity! And I am struck afresh at how normal it has become to have important groups from Russia here.

A Russian-speaking rector from Tallinn, Estonia, talked of the bridges we must cross and the bridges we must burn, then invited her seven-year-old granddaughter to share with us her question: 'Why is it that money seems to be more important than love in the world?' Jean-Loup Dherse, former Chief Executive of Eurotunnel, Vice-Chairman of the CRT from France, and Dutchman Maurice Stroop followed. Then it was the turn of ICF founder and President Bill Porter to conduct an inter-generational interview with his granddaughter that veered between laughter and tears.

It's always dangerous to single out individuals by name. I've appreciated Chris Evans' relaxed and 'laid back' style of leadership. And the way when there's a pressing need in the kitchen, he was able to ask for eight volunteers to go down to the kitchen with their translation headsets (exceptionally!), so that they could keep listening to the meeting, to help peel the hundreds of eggs needed for lunch. Elizabeth Loy from Britain is a genius with flowers; with her team, she has scattered works of art around the house. In every corner, on every table, you find a simple rose, a piece of twisted root, a few stones, beautifully arranged to rest our minds and souls.

A local businessman brought a group to visit the Caux Expo, and learn something about the history of the house - we understood that the group of 40 was connected with the local winegrowers' festival. When they arrived, we discovered that they were indeed taking part in the festival, in the production, but that they represented the winegrowers of the world beyond, and all came from Romania. When they heard that it was the centenary of the founding of the company that built Mountain House, they burst into spontaneous song wishing the old girl long life.

We've been turning our hearts and minds to the programme for Caux next year, the year 2000 - it's quite a stretch in the midst of all else. We hope that by the end of the summer we can offer a programme, with themes and dates, to use with the seriously busy people who are already booked up by the time we manage to produce our printed programme around Christmas. A possible framework for next year would be to take a week for each of the 'six current aims' as stated in the Cyprus and Jamaica Consultation reports (see the current Caux programme, if you need reminding!). Any ideas or suggestions welcome. We've also been taking some time to share dreams about how Caux could be used more all through the year. There's no shortage of needs in the world, nor of enthusiasm here! We've also heard from the newly set up International Council of MRA, who have been meeting intensively during the last week, and from the 'elders' group that has been constituted - see the next World Bulletin for more details.

The cast of *Gente Que Avanza* put on a sketch and spoke of their own experiences, for the last *Heart of the Matter*, and they were followed in the final session by a stream of speakers that showed us that this session had reached much deeper than purely business questions. 'Yesterday I called up my brother for the first time in years, just to tell him I love him. That's a direct result of this week,' said one participant. An Irish woman said, 'Coming to Caux can be a dangerous temptation - I want to come again and again. I have a sense of it all coming together, and of the things that you can turn around.' A trade unionist spoke of the fresh hope he had found for the less privileged of the world. A Colombian businessman said he'd come to learn about business ethics, 'But we learnt here that we have to work on ourselves before we can work for others.' Another Latin American spoke of the hope she had found in the faith of the senior people. 'I believe in dreams and utopia, because we can work for them to become a reality.'

Best wishes from a Caux that is stretched to the full, and in good spirits,

Andrew Stallybrass