

From under the rubble : A fresh start for Europe

Scott Fitzgerald, the American novelist who stayed in the Caux Palace in the 1930s, knew something of suffering. He wrote of ‘scars healed, a loose parallel to the pathology of the skin, but there is no such thing in the life of an individual. There are open wounds, shrunk sometimes to the size of a pin-prick, but wounds still. The marks of suffering are more comparable to the loss of a finger, or the sight of an eye. We may not miss them, either, for one minute in a year, but if we should, there is nothing to be done about it.’¹ The terrible years of war could never be undone, but could the wounds be healed, if not effaced? Perhaps 70 million dead; many more scarred, raped, wounded, refugees. Echoes of suffering that it may take centuries to heal.

Economic and social reconstruction would be vitally important, but more would be needed. Alan Bullock, one of the major British historians to study this period, writes that ‘The passions which ruled Hitler’s mind were ignoble: hatred, resentment, the lust to dominate, and, where he could not dominate, to destroy.’² And indeed Hitler had succeeded beyond his wildest dreams of destruction. Bullock concludes, ‘The great revolutions of the past, whatever their ultimate fate, have been identified with the release of certain powerful ideas: individual conscience, liberty, equality, national freedom, social justice. National Socialism produced nothing. Hitler constantly exalted force over the power of ideas and delighted to prove that men were governed by cupidity, fear, and their baser passions.’

Initiatives of Change and Moral Re-Armament, and before that, the Oxford Group, never expressed a systematic theology or philosophy. ‘Doubtless the groups don’t talk about God as well as theologians do,’ Professor Spoerri wrote to a friend back in 1933, ‘but perhaps God cares less that we speak well about him than that we are present on the ground where we can dialogue with him.’³ The Catholic thinker, Gabriel Marcel, one of the many committed churchmen to make his way to Caux, described MRA as ‘a philosophy of life applied in action’. As a movement, it bears strong traces of Anglo-Saxon pragmatism, perhaps accompanied even by a certain mistrust of intellectualising and intellectuals. The Swiss who started Caux had the moral and spiritual reconstruction of Europe in their sights, as part of the stated aim of ‘remaking the world’. They did not specifically set out to create a centre for Franco-German reconciliation. Yet several historians have noted Moral Re-Armament’s contribution in this area. Hardly an accident, it was not so much the fruit of a carefully conceived master plan as the natural by-product of an effort to put men and women under God’s authority, to submit themselves to his will.

There is only a single double-page spread in the illustrated report of the first 1946 summer at the Mountain House conference centre that touches on the beginnings of healing of some of the wounds of the war: a clear indication that at the time, there seemed to be other issues with a higher priority – the problems of industry; the production of coal. Thierry de la Kéthulle, a Belgian from Brussels is quoted saying, ‘My father died in the

¹ ‘*Tender is the Night*’, F. SCOTT FITZGERALD, *Wordsworth Classics*, London, 1994, p.181.

² ‘*Hitler, a study in tyranny*’, by Alan BULLOCK, *Pelican Books*, London, 1962, p.804.

³ ‘*Lettres à sa famille et ses amis*’, *Theophil SPOERRI*, p.127.

war of 1914-18, and in this last war, my brother was killed. My sister's two children lost their lives. I decided that the rest of my life should be dedicated to inciting hatred against the Germans. Here I have realised that with hate we can only destroy the world – never rebuild it. To those Germans who are present in this assembly I want to say that I am sorry for the thoughts I have cherished in the past. I know that with you we shall be able to rebuild.'

An anonymous German is quoted, 'I fought with the German army in Italy and later on the Eastern front. I was captured by the Russians and spent nine months in a prison camp in Poland. In the years gone by I had not the courage to put the highest moral challenge to the Nazis. It seemed too dangerous to me. Now I feel the terrible burden of my failure. I share in the guilt of my nation and ask the forgiveness of all those who suffered under the German yoke.' They were among the first of thousands to find healing from the hurts and hatreds of this bitter war.

In 1994, a Washington 'think-tank', the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), produced a book called *Religion, the missing dimension of statecraft*¹. One chapter, in part based on a study of the Caux archives details Moral Re-Armament's part in the post-war reconciliation between France and Germany. According to the study, 'A fair portion of the entire West German elite'² came to Caux between 1946 and 1950. The chapter by Edward Luttwak headed 'Franco-German Reconciliation: The Overlooked Role of the Moral Re-Armament Movement' describes 'its important contribution to one of the greatest achievements in the entire record of modern statecraft: the astonishingly rapid Franco-German reconciliation after 1945'.³ The case-study notes that 'MRA was responsible for the first organized and substantial activity in the field in 1946-48 – that is, before the many and varied similar initiatives eventually undertaken by trades unionists, business interests, religious groupings, local border-area officials, academic bodies, diplomats, and politicians from both sides'. Luttwak notes that MRA's efforts 'were explicitly recognized as highly consequential by the two undisputed protagonists of the intergovernmental reconciliation, Robert Schuman and Konrad Adenauer, who both used their MRA contacts to initiate and support official activities of great moment'.⁴

Luttwak quotes a letter from German Chancellor Adenauer to Frank Buchman in 1951: 'It is my conviction, too, that men and nations cannot outwardly enjoy stable relationships until they have been inwardly preparing for them. In this respect Moral Re-Armament has rendered great and lasting services... Very soon after the war Moral Re-Armament reached out a hand to the German people and helped them to make contact again with other nations... In recent months, too, we have seen the conclusion, after some difficult negotiations, of important international agreements. Here, also, I believe, Moral Re-Armament has played an invisible but effective part in bridging differences of opinion between negotiating parties, and has kept before them the objective of peaceful agreement in the search for the common good which is the true purpose of human life.'

¹ *Religion, the missing dimension of statecraft* edited by Douglas JOHNSTON and Cynthia SAMPSON, Oxford University Press, New York, 1994.

² *id.* p.55.

³ *id.* p.38.

⁴ *id.* pp.38, 39.

According to Philippe Mottu, ‘no less than eleven members of his family visited Caux,’¹ and the Caux archives contain a hand-written post-card of thanks from Adenauer to Buchman for the change in the atmosphere at home, due to their stay in Caux. Yet when Adenauer came to Caux in 1949, he was listed only as ‘Director of an Electric Power Company’, and some of those who advised Buchman described him as a man of the past, with no future role to play. His son, Max, then a member of the Cologne city council, said in Caux, ‘Here again has come to birth the old longing, deep in humanity, to build the true Kingdom of God and a world where people have a home and feel at home ; a country in which a new language is spoken, the language of the Holy Spirit.’

In 1950, when he was Foreign Minister of France, Robert Schuman wrote the preface to the French edition of Frank Buchman’s speeches, *Remaking the World*. He wryly confessed that ‘thus far statesmen have only been moderately successful in “remaking the world”’. He would have been sceptical if Buchman offered just another new theory, he said, but, in what has become one of the classic definitions: ‘What Moral Re-Armament brings us is a philosophy of life applied in action.’ Schuman continued : ‘To begin by creating a moral climate in which true brotherly unity can flourish, overarching all that today tears the world apart – that is the immediate goal. The acquisition of wisdom about men and affairs by bringing people together in public assemblies and public encounters – that is the means employed. To provide teams of trained people, ready for the service of the state, apostles of reconciliation and builders of a new world – that is the beginning of a far-reaching transformation of society in which, during fifteen war-ravaged years, the first steps have already been made.’ He concluded, ‘It is not a question of a change in policy: it is a question of changing people. Democracy and her freedoms can be saved only by the quality of the people who speak in her name.’² What had first intrigued Schuman about Buchman and his work was a chance meeting in a train the previous year with Louis Bocquey, an industrialist from Lille, in the North of France. Bocquey told Schuman about the changes that were taking place in the industries of the area, thanks to a change in spirit among employers and trades unionists who had come to Caux.

In June 1950, Frank Buchman received the Légion d’honneur from the French government in recognition of his efforts, and two years later, he later received the German Grand Cross of the Order of Merit. But Luttwak underlines the very wide and representative range of participation from France and Germany. The industrial groups from both sides included many from the coal and steel industries – ‘a classic case of serendipity’, since the chosen path towards European integration started with the European Coal and Steel Community.

Another of those who has examined the work of Caux with a historian’s eye is Professor Henri Rieben, for many years the President of the Fondation Jean Monnet pour l’Europe attached to the University of Lausanne. In his book *From the European wars to the union of Europe*³, he wrote about the study of the thinking and action of Monnet that the spiritual successors of Buchman have carried forward in Caux, and added, ‘For my part, I have not forgotten what Europe owes to the dialogue and co-operation that developed in

¹ MOTTU, ‘*The Story of Caux, from La Belle Epoque to Moral Re-Armament*’, p.114.

² ‘*Refaire le Monde*’, by Frank BUCHMAN, *La Compagnie du Livre*, Paris, 1950, p.v.

³ ‘*Des Guerres européennes à l’union de l’Europe*’, by Henri RIEBEN, *Fondation Jean Monnet pour l’Europe, Centre de recherches européennes*, Lausanne, 1987, p.18.

the decisive post-war years between Buchman on the one hand and Konrad Adenauer and Robert Schuman on the other.’

He described one of the turning points in Caux, where hate was transformed into love. Irène Laure, a French socialist militant, member of the resistance during the war, and at its close a member of the Constituent Assembly, came to Caux in 1947. There she met Buchman and was confronted with a large group of Germans. In Rieben’s words, ‘Burdened with the experiences of two world wars and their load of hatred, Irène Laure experienced the shock of this double encounter. Forgiveness washed away the hatred that held her fast, opening the way to friendship, and led Irène Laure to a life of commitment over the next 40 years which bore fruit in the Franco-German reconciliation.’

‘For a French mother in the summer of 1947, Switzerland meant butter, milk, health for the children,’ notes Jacqueline Piguet, in her book, *For the love of tomorrow - the Irène Laure story*.¹ Piguet describes Laure’s decisive encounter with a German woman in Caux – it was Claritta von Trott, the widow of one of those killed after the failed plot against Hitler’s life in July 1944. Laure poured out her bitter wartime experiences, of friends in the resistance who lost their lives, of hunger and cruelty. Then she said, ‘The reason I am telling you all this, Madame, is that I want to be free of this hate.’ Von Trott then told Laure of her own suffering at the hand of the Nazis, but she concluded, ‘I realise that we did not resist enough, that we did not resist in time. Because of this you have suffered terribly. Please forgive us.’²

Speaking to 5,000 people at a public meeting in Lille, four years later, and after many visits to Germany, Laure said, ‘Dear French friends and comrades, workers, employers, intellectuals, I realise I may cause many of you some heartache. But I must tell you that I have paid the price of a united Europe and thereby a united world and world peace. I went to Germany. I know I may offend many of you. For weeks my heart ached, too, when I spoke in Germany. But I made peace. Our task is to take the first step towards the Germans so that what happened before can never happen again.’³

Gabriel Marcel sets Laure’s story in parallel with that of a young German who was also present in Caux at the same time – Peter Petersen, who had been a convinced Nazi. He went on to be a Member of Parliament, and a pioneer of the Federal Republic’s relations with Israel and the Jewish communities in the world. Petersen related that ‘millions of Germans were trying to prove (by any means in their power) that they had never heard of National Socialism’. ‘I had always worn a uniform and I arrived at Caux in an outfit of my grandfather’s that was both too short and too big,’ Petersen recalled. ‘We were met by a French chorus with a German song, a song which foretold the true destiny of Germany. We were already past masters at defending ourselves when we were accused. But here the doors were wide open for us and we were completely disarmed.’ He described Irène Laure’s first speech from the Caux platform, where she ‘spoke three phrases which were to mark a turning point in our lives, both as individuals and as Germans : “I have so hated Germany that I wanted to see her erased from the map of Europe. But I have seen here that my hatred was wrong and I wish to ask the forgiveness of all the

¹ *For the love of tomorrow - the Irène Laure story* by Jacqueline PIGUET, Grosvenor Books, London, 1985, p. 10.

² PIGUET, *For the love of tomorrow - the Irène Laure story*, p. 12.

³ *id.* p. 47.

Germans present.”... I was dumbfounded. For several nights it was impossible for me to sleep. All my past rose up in revolt against the courage of this woman. But we knew, my friends and I, that she showed us the only way open to Germany if that country wanted to join in the reconstruction of Europe. The foundations of this Europe should be – Madame Laure had shown us this – forgiveness. One day we went to her and expressed our deep sorrow and our shame at what she herself and her people had suffered through our fault. We promised her that we would consecrate our lives and work so that these conditions could never again be reproduced in any part of the world.’¹

The CSIS study notes MRA’s impressive contacts with those who could make possible travel at this difficult time – with the Allied occupation authorities in Germany, and with the Swiss Foreign Office. The practical difficulties of any international meeting at this time were hard to imagine today. My father, Bill Stallybrass, was one of those who helped to organise the travel of the first large groups coming from Britain. He wrote, ‘During my demobilisation leave I acted as transport officer in Paris. Communications had not fully recovered from German occupation and allied bombing.’ He was nicknamed ‘Monsieur d’Oxford’ by one of the railway officials who had known the work of the Oxford Group before the war. He travelled to Calais, to help see Buchman’s party through customs on their way to the opening of the Mountain House centre. ‘I arrived in Army uniform well before the arrival of their ship, introduced myself to the chief customs officer and explained the purpose of the Caux conference. He asked me to stand behind the counter with his officers and to identify each of our friends, who was then waved through without question. Later I was amused to discover that I had been in breach of Army regulations in wearing a uniform abroad while on leave.’

Some of Buchman’s colleagues went to the top in their efforts to facilitate the travel to Caux of large numbers of Germans. In the week that General Marshall, the American Secretary of State launched his historic plan to help the economic recovery of Europe, he met a senior MRA worker, Kenaston Twitchell (through Twitchell’s father-in-law, Senator Alexander Smith). Twitchell then also met the Secretary of War, Robert Patterson, who promised to remove any obstacles, and gave Twitchell and his colleagues an introduction to General Lucius Clay, the Commander in the American zone in Germany.² Similar contacts took place in London with Lord Pakenham, the Minister in charge of the British zone. Twitchell recalls visiting Pakenham with Garth Lean: ‘He was deeply convinced of the need for a moral and spiritual awakening in that country. “Along with food,” he said, “the kind of work you are doing is the only thing that will do any good in Germany now.”’³

Twitchell, his wife and two colleagues left Caux in July 1947 to meet some of the leadership of the ruined Germany, and invite them to Mountain House. General Clay, in charge of the American Zone, called in the leaders of the four ‘Länder’ in his zone to meet them. ‘Their bewilderment gradually brightened into surprise and appreciation,’ Twitchell recalls. ‘Most of them had not been out of Germany since 1933. Some had been in

¹ MARCEL, *‘Fresh Hope for the World’*, p. 24-5.

² *‘Frank Buchman - a life’*, p.349, see also *‘Regeneration in the Ruhr - the unknown story of a decisive answer to Communism in postwar Europe’*, by Kenaston TWITCHELL, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, USA, 1981, p. 8-9.

³ TWITCHELL, *‘Regeneration in the Ruhr’*, p. 12.

prison. Most of them had been against Hitler for many years. The thought of their wives and children visiting a free country, with good food and friends, had been beyond their dreams.¹

The American think-tank's study lists the elements that contributed towards the success of these meetings: the conference participants lived together in the same informal and strikingly beautiful setting, many for several weeks. An important part of the Caux experience of community from the start was participation in the practical work of the house. Working side by side in the kitchen peeling potatoes or washing up induced 'the usual sense of rueful comradeship'.² These social-material factors reinforced the more spiritual elements. 'Personal declarations made in public sessions by the participants often communicated their sense of moral discovery (thereby inviting others to reveal their own) and often included a confessional element.' Furthermore, Buchman and his colleagues 'were highly experienced in the subtle art of unobtrusive but effective spiritual persuasion'.

One of those present in Caux at this time recalls, 'Buchman was an artist. He had an eye for effect. He understood the importance of creating an appropriate atmosphere for different occasions. We were assembled in the old hotel's largest reception room...The large choir, in their national costumes, were in place on the low stage at the front of the hall. Word came that the buses had arrived. A strange hush came over the room, and then in a few minutes the German group were ushered through the doors by their Swiss hosts. The Germans moved slowly forward, eyes cast down, their clothes quite noticeably shabby. The packed room watched silently as the party were settled into the seats of honour reserved for them. When all were seated the choir stood up, and suddenly a song written for the occasion, in German, with music by a young Norwegian, burst forth. Uncertain at first, the audience rose as well.'³ Lean notes: 'Buchman insisted that the emphasis at Caux must be upon Germany's future rather than her past, her potential rather than her guilt. Whether dealing with an individual or a nation he was only interested in reviewing past mistakes as a basis for discovering a new way forward. He simply treated the Germans exactly like everyone else.'⁴

Another of those present vividly paints a picture of a senior German arriving with one yellow and one brown shoe, all that they had left. Gunnar Wieselgren, one of the first four Swedes to arrive in Caux in June 1946, recalls their journey across Germany: 'There were no planes and no transit by rail. One Swedish busline had just opened. The bus did not go through the towns as the streets were still blocked by collapsed houses. There were of course no hotels or places to stay overnight, so the bus had two drivers who relayed each other and we drove straight through. Stops were made in the forest for toilet needs. Often when we stopped we were surrounded by hungry children, and the food we had brought for the journey was soon given away to them.'⁵ The contrast with clean and orderly Switzerland was all the more striking. 'It must have been even more of a sign of a new world for all the Germans to be received with such care and friendship.' Another of that party recalls the

¹ TWITCHELL, *'Regeneration in the Ruhr'*, p. 23.

² *'Religion, the missing dimension of statecraft'*, p. 48.

³ Clara JAEGER, in *'Never to lose my vision'*, Grosvenor Books, London, 1995, p. 91.

⁴ LEAN, *'Frank Buchman - a life'*, p. 351.

⁵ *Letter from Gunnar WIESELGREN, 10.10.95.*

shock of seeing the disaster of destruction with her own eyes, and in Basel, at the Swiss border, realising how a line on a map can make the difference between life and death.

Twitchell describes his first post-war visit to Germany: 'Frankfurt was the first devastated city we saw. It gave a curious sense of unreality, as if you were passing through an abandoned Hollywood set, with false fronts on non-existing buildings. Rubble was everywhere, usually piled up to the second floor, behind gaping shells of walls. Yet even there, you occasionally saw signs of habitation, as people tried to eke out an existence. The central railroad station was a mass of twisted steel, yet somehow trains were running, and a throng of people hurrying through the ruined passages.'¹ There was real hunger. He describes a meeting with the Minister of Labour of North-Rhine Westphalia : 'He had had two narrow slices of stale bread for breakfast, a few potatoes and some decaying cabbage for lunch...The potato crop had failed.'²

Luttwak, in the CSIS book, remarks, 'the sights and experiences offered by undestroyed Switzerland had a dreamlike character. But for those who came from devastated Germany it was sheer heaven to be in a place where bridges still stood, all buildings were intact, and hot water could be had by turning a tap. And then there was the food... Although Mountain House offered nothing resembling the old hotel's gourmet kitchen, there was no lack of food, including such great luxuries as real butter and chocolate. Early Christian ascetics had sought God by deliberate hunger. MRA's early contingents at Caux found fraternal conviviality around the dining-room tables.'³

Another observer and participant, British historian Robin Mowat, noted in 1948 the difficulties of describing 'the mingling of grave and gay' without lapsing into the sentimental, while noting 'intense emotion certainly, but of a deeply spiritual order'.⁴ He also noted that 'it is the distinguished character of the large German delegation which impresses one as much as anything. It is made up of representatives from all the zones (of allied occupation) except the Russian, but including Berlin, and all have come with the blessing of the Allied Military Governors concerned.' Mowat marvelled, 'You never quite know who it is you are going to sit down with at a meal. At breakfast, I knew only one of those at my table, Dr Peters, Professor of Law at Berlin University. The others turned out to be the Minister of Economic Affairs for South Württemberg (in the French Zone) and his wife, the Foreign Editor of the Munich *Neue Zeitung* (the largest circulation newspaper in Germany), and the Governor of Hanover, one of the outstanding women in European politics.'

Mowat was also struck by a French chorus, singing in German 'Es muss alles anders werden' – 'Everything must be different', and the productions in the theatre: *The Good Road*, a musical revue, and French, German and English casts playing the industrial drama, *The Forgotten Factor*, in the three languages. The Swiss MRA Foundation's report for the year 1948-'49 records Konrad Adenauer attending the première of the German production of *The Forgotten Factor* play, and CHF98,000 of expenses for the tour of the two productions in Germany itself. 5,000 participants from 44 countries take part in the conferences, including '5 Prime Ministers,

¹ TWITCHELL, 'Regeneration in the Ruhr', p.14.

² *id.* p.19.

³ 'Religion, the missing dimension of statecraft', p.48.

⁴ 'The Sprit of Caux, New World News Agency, Robin MOWAT, 23.9.48.

53 Cabinet Ministers, 136 Members of Parliament, 15 Presidents of national trades union federations, 120 church leaders, senior army officers and industrialists'. Mowat reports the visit by the Swiss President, Enrico Celio, by the President of the Swiss Parliament, and Max Huber, who was President of the International Committee of the Red Cross through the war years. All were concerned, Mowat said, to see Switzerland use her neutrality to good effect, and help to integrate Germany into 'the new Europe of tomorrow'.

Germans who had been to Caux produced a booklet, *Es Muss Alles Anders Werden*, 'Everything must be different', to offer the ideas of Moral Re-Armament to more of their fellow citizens. A first edition of 5,000 was produced in Munich in a matter of weeks just before Christmas 1947. A group of Swedes raised the money to send the paper for a first national edition, and the American paper industry sent further supplies of this precious material. In all, one and half million copies of the pamphlet were produced and circulated, including 400,000 in the Russian zone of occupation.¹

In October 1948, a convoy of buses with 260 people left Caux for Germany with the musical show *The Good Road*. It was, Mottu reckons, the largest group of civilians to visit the country since the end of the war. Adenauer was one of the invitation committee. The same year, a group of German leaders were invited to the United States for a World Assembly of Moral Re-Armament. One those who went was Hans von Herwarth, shortly to become Germany's first post-war Ambassador to London. In an interview he gave in the *Hollywood Citizen*, he said, 'Democracy in Germany in the years between 1918 and 1933 was not a success, and finally did not prevent Hitler's coming to power... It had no real conviction and fighting spirit. Therefore when faced with Hitler's National Socialism, a wrong ideology, it was defeated. We must now build up a new ideologically inspired democracy. Then Germany will not turn totalitarian again. We in Europe must go back to our old Christian traditions. It is not sufficient to unite politically and economically. We need a strong ideological base. The inspired ideology of Moral Re-Armament will give to the German people and to all Europeans the strength to unite and fight for the reconstruction of a new world, inspired by good will.'²

Teams with these stage productions spent weeks in Germany. In February 1950, a small news item in *The Manchester Guardian* reported a major shake-up in the Communist party in the industrial Ruhr heartland of Germany, under the headline, 'A New Communist Heresy – Moral Re-Armament'.³ The newly appointed party chairman calls the links between party members and MRA a 'most dangerous symptom'. Forty of the leadership had been forced to resign or have been expelled. Why?

As Jean Monnet, the father of European unity, wrote in his historic note of 3rd May 1950: 'The course of events must be changed, and to do that, you have to change the spirit of people.'⁴ According to Twitchell, approximately 200,000 miners, steelworkers and company managers, with their families, and others saw *The Forgotten Factor* or *The Good Road* in their tour of twelve German cities. Four hundred meetings with Works

¹ TWITCHELL, 'Regeneration in the Ruhr', p.33-4.

² *id.* p.39.

³ Quoted in 'Regeneration in the Ruhr', 9th February, 1950, by Terence Prittie, then the paper's correspondent in Germany.

⁴ 'L'Europe, une longue marche', *Fondation Jean Monnet pour l'Europe, Centre de recherches européennes, Lausanne, 1985, p.43.*

Councils and management were held. Many of Buchman's young team spent months in Germany, living in the homes of the workers, sleeping on a couch in the living room, sharing the precarious living conditions of their hosts in the ruins of the industrial heartland of the Ruhr.

Robert Wegerhof, a Ruhr miner, and a convinced Marxist for many years told how he first heard of MRA on a Soviet ideological course after he had been taken prisoner of war in 1945. They were warned against MRA which was described to them as 'a Christian movement, whose members suffered from the same defects as all other Christians. Yet we were warned never to come into contact with Moral Re-Armament people, a thing which we had never been told with regard to Christians in general.'¹ When he was finally released and sent home, he discovered that one of the MRA group, a young Norwegian, a former resistance fighter, was staying in the family home. His father and sister, both convinced Marxists, had been deeply touched by these new ideas – and he voted with others to expel his father from the Communist Party. Before long, Wegerhof was expelled too, since he wanted to find out more about Moral Re-Armament, and had secretly gone to an MRA meeting.

Two of the Marxists who came to Caux and found an experience of change, and over time, an experience of faith, were Max Bladeck and Paul Kurowsky. On the platform in a meeting, they conducted a dialogue, of the questions they faced in the Ruhr about Caux, and why they as Marxists went there. 'As a Communist, I don't believe in God,' said Max, to be answered, 'My dear Max, it is not a question of whether you believe in God, but whether you listen to him.' Kurowsky said, 'Marxists, Communists, Social Democrats and Christians all want a new social order. They all want the same thing – a social order where the exploitation of man by man is eliminated. Moral Re-Armament wants to put people before things.'² Bladeck added, 'In Moers (in the Ruhr, his home) I got to know and love the Moral Re-Armament people through their unselfish caring.' He saw in Buchman's ideas a way out of the conflict between two blocs – Capitalist and Communist – that he could see leading towards another war. 'We can crystallise the best elements of both these giant forces for the benefit of humanity and so bridge the gulf between them. Instead of being at war with each other, they can fight for progress side by side,' he said. He added, 'I have been freed from one-sided thinking and narrowness and have begun to listen to the voice of my heart, which shows me the best road for myself and my fellow men.'³ Not entirely surprisingly, they too were expelled from the party, but they and their friends did not go quietly. At one party meeting, chaired by Heinz Renner, the Vice-Chairman of the West German Communist Party, a motion condemning 'the new Communist heresy' was only carried by 407 votes to 400.⁴ These workers with a background of years of militant struggle under a vicious right-wing Nazi dictatorship were convinced not by fine-sounding theory, but by the changes that they saw and experienced among the employers and managers.

In 1952 and 1953, Radio Moscow twice attacked MRA in broadcasts. 'These men substitute for the inevitable class struggle the eternal battle between good and evil... That is the heart of their action whose consequence is nothing less, according to them, than the transformation of the world.'⁵ The freedom for Moral

¹ MARCEL, 'Fresh Hope for the World', p. 107.

² 'Caux Information Service', no. 15, 1949, p. 6.

³ 'Caux Information Service', no. 8, 1949, p. 6.

⁴ LEAN, 'Frank Buchman - a life', p. 365.

⁵ Radio Moscow, 9th January 1953, quoted in 'Fresh Hope for the World', p. 178.

Re-Armament to operate openly in Central and Eastern Europe would have to wait until the 1990's – and among the first to come to Caux was a Novosti Press journalist who had authored one of the attacks on MRA. In 1951, General Bor-Komorowski, who during the war had commanded the 400,000-strong Polish Underground Army, said in Caux, 'When the countries behind the Iron Curtain are free again, people will need urgently a new foundation for national life.'¹ It was to be a long, 50-year wait.

A French literary and political figure who came at this time was Jean François Deniau. In his *Mémoires de 7 vies*² he describes his visit during the summer of 1948. He reacted to the Anglo-Saxon, American feel of Caux, but noted that the movement started in Oxford at a time when others, like Philby, in Cambridge were opting for Communism. The aim, he observed, 'is to change man and rediscover God – or is it to rediscover God and change man'. The theatre productions are 'very good American music hall stuff'; the MRA people are young, dynamic, polyglot, 'it's a little like a religious Club Med'. He notes an anti-colonial bent that he puts down to the American influence, they'll side with Makarios against the British in Cyprus, as they'll also side with the Sultan of Morocco against France. But he appreciates the attention given to the fundamental problem of the Franco-German reconciliation: 'No Europe without Germany; no Germany without freedom; no freedom without prosperity.' Robert Schuman is the guest of honour of this session, and shakes the hand of a German leader on the platform. They've probably done the wash-up together, but not too much, Deniau notes ironically. Then, on an adventure up the mountain, he falls and breaks his leg, and is forced to spend three weeks in the Montreux hospital. Thanks to the care of a cheerful American doctor from MRA, who had served with the Republican armies in the Spanish civil war, 'My leg was saved, but my anti-holidays were ruined.'

François Mitterand also visited Caux briefly at this time. His long-expected and often delayed visit gave rise to an elaborate practical joke that almost went disastrously awry. Mitterand was already a cabinet minister. Several of the leaders of the small political party that he was a member of had already visited the conference centre, through the invitation of a French jute industrialist much involved in MRA, Robert Carmichael. Mitterand had been expected for lunch, but didn't arrive; a special tea with Frank Buchman was prepared, but the main guest was still nowhere to be seen. Carmichael left for Geneva with a friend to see if he could run Mitterand to earth. When the guest had still not arrived by supper, a handful of young people thought they'd stage a fake arrival, since no-one in the house knew what the real Mitterand looked like – he wasn't yet so widely known, and the period was less visual (and televisual) than our own.

They enlisted a distinguished Vaud doctor who owned a Citroen 'traction avant' car, such as a minister would drive, to lend his car and play the part of Mitterand. One of their number donned a false moustache to play the part of the chauffeur. The message was given that the minister would arrive at 9 pm, and an anxious Mme Carmichael mobilised a welcoming committee and a chorus. A few seconds before the fake minister and his chauffeur set off from the back door, on the road up from Montreux, to drive round to the front, they saw the lights of another car coming up the hill. They decided to wait and let it pass – and they saw the real Mitterand drive past, in a Citroen 'traction avant', to a grand reception at the front door. Other young people had heard

¹ *Moral Re-Armament press release, 27th September, 1951.*

² *'Mémoires de 7 vies, 1. Les temps aventureux', Plon, Paris, 1994, pp.288-293.*

rumours of the farce, and felt that now the joke was going too far; they pleaded with their young friends to call a halt. Some even headed for cover, expecting a massive explosion, and a public reprimanding of the ring-leaders, and still the next day thought that the real Mitterand had failed to arrive. Mitterand left before lunch the following day and never as far as I know commented on what he thought of the experience, but it is an amusing example of how providence can come to the aid of practical jokers – or perhaps even of jokers helping providence.¹

A sixty-six page document summarises the first four years of the new conference centre in Caux. 30,400 people have taken part in the conferences, from 104 nations, including 10 from the Soviet Union. 3,113 Germans and 1,983 French are among them. Now with the perspective of distance, we can see that this contribution to the healing of the wounds of Europe has been one of Mountain House's greatest contributions. 'What is the most significant development in Europe since the war?' Baron von Etzdorf was asked by an American journalist in 1960 – Etzdorf later became under-secretary of Foreign Affairs, and Ambassador to Great Britain. Etzdorf replied: 'The new accord between France and Germany. For this the work of Moral Re-Armament is largely responsible.'² A year later, after Frank Buchman's death, the German government *Official Bulletin* wrote, 'Since 1947 Caux has been the symbol of Dr. Buchman's work for the German people. Through Caux he brought Germany back into the circle of civilised nations, after Hitler had banned him from Germany and earned the distrust and contempt of other nations for our country. It was at Caux that Germans of all sorts, politicians and scientists, industrialists and workers, met those who had been their enemies during the war. It was Dr. Buchman who made possible the first German visits to Caux. Thus Caux became one of the great moral forces to which we owe our new position in the world.'³

Carl Jung, the great Swiss psychologist wrote in 1945, 'If the Germans today are having a hard time of it outwardly, fate has at least given them a unique opportunity of turning their eyes to the inner man. In this way they might make amends for a sin of omission of which our whole civilisation is guilty... Who has had a more immediate experience of the feeling of helplessness and abandonment to the powers of darkness than the German who fell into the clutches of the Germans? If collective guilt could only be understood and accepted, a great step forward would have been taken. But this alone is no cure, just as no neurotic is cured by mere understanding. The great question remains: How am I to live with this shadow? What attitude is required if I am to be able to live in spite of evil? In order to find a valid answer to these questions, a complete spiritual renewal is needed. And this cannot be given gratis, each man must strive to achieve it for himself. Neither can old formulas which once had value be brought into force again. The eternal truths cannot be transmitted mechanically; in every epoch they must be born anew from the human psyche.'⁴

Sadly the Europe of today has not been able to learn the eternal truths mechanically. They must be born anew in the Balkans, in ex-Yugoslavia, in many of the lands of the former Soviet Union, but also between

¹ Based on the recollections of Michel Sentis and Daniel Mottu, two of the young people involved.

² 'Regeneration in the Ruhr', p. 60.

³ MOTTU, 'The Story of Caux, from La Belle Epoque to Moral Re-Armament', p.116.

⁴ Quoted in 'Regeneration in the Ruhr', p.68. 'After the Catastrophe', an essay, published in 1945, from 'The Collected Works of C.G. Jung', Series XX, Vol. 10, Princeton University Press, 1964.

England and Ireland, between Basques, Catalans and Castilians. And now even peaceful Switzerland has been forced to face the shadows of her war history. But few in 1946 would have believed that such a profound and rapid change was possible. These events give hope, hope that old hates can be dissolved, seemingly eternal and inevitable conflicts ended.

Andrew Stallybrass, 31.10.2018