

# *"Caux is the place !"*

or  
how the international Moral Re-Armament  
conference centre was born

An eye-witness account

A lecture given at Caux on 30 June 1996, the 50<sup>th</sup>  
anniversary of Mountain House

by **Philippe Mottu**



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## Caux is the place

**L**et me begin my story by telling you about the Oxford Group's impact on Switzerland in the 1930s and what happened in the war years. This will help to make clear the reasons for the initiative we took to create the Moral Re-Armament conference centre at Caux.

### The 1930s

In October 1929, the period of post-war euphoria came to a sudden end in the United States. The New York stock exchange began to collapse, dragging with it the whole western economy. Hundreds of banks went bankrupt and a deep depression descended on both sides of the Atlantic. After 34 months of continuous decline, Wall Street reached its historic lowest level in July 1932. Thousands of businesses had closed their doors and millions of workers found themselves unemployed. Social security at that time did not yet exist and frightful poverty affected the whole of the western world.

In Europe, Mussolini had seized power in Italy and Hitler became Chancellor of the Third Reich after parliamentary elections in 1933. In the USSR Stalin reigned supreme, imposing a severe and absolute totalitarian regime. America had turned in on itself, unwilling to see the mounting danger in Europe.

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This was the depressing political, social and economic background when Frank Buchman and a few friends came to Geneva in January 1932 to meet some senior officials of the League of Nations. He also took the chance to have meetings with prominent citizens of Geneva. My eldest sister took part in one of these meetings and so it was that I first heard about the Oxford Group in our family circle at the vicarage in Chêne.

Switzerland was at that time in a deep economic crisis. Protectionism, which then prevailed throughout the world, was closing all our export markets one after the other. The social climate, stirred up by the ideological opposition of left and right, was becoming violent. The bankruptcy of the Discount Bank, which served small businesses, had shaken the whole of Geneva. Soon the confrontations turned into riots. On 9<sup>th</sup> November 1932 the army was forced to intervene, but in so clumsy a manner as to result in many dead and wounded.

For me, living close by, the shock was traumatic. Though a patriot and opposed to Communism, I was deeply shaken by the dramatic turn of events. I was 20, working in a private bank in Geneva and I was about to leave to spend two years in a New York bank. A surprising event was to swing my life in another direction and into another dimension. In the evening of 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1933 I decided to go to St Peter's Cathedral to listen to Rev. Jean de Saussure, who was to take a service for businessmen. I went into that church as a young agnostic, full of ambition for his life. I came out an hour later, having had the personal experience of an encounter with the One who has written on my heart these words : "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." That evening my life found an anchor in a faith which has never left me through trials, ups and downs, joys and sorrows, successes and failures.

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In the autumn of 1933 I left for Lausanne to complete my studies so as to qualify for the Faculty of Theology of Geneva University. It was there that I met the Oxford Group in the person of a Latin professor : Jules Rochat. Very simply and naturally he talked to me about moral standards by which to test our thoughts and actions, about listening to the inner voice and about honesty as the conditions for normal living with the people around us.

In September 1935 Frank Buchman returned to Geneva with a strong team to meet the delegates taking part in the General Assembly of the League of Nations. He had established his headquarters in the Hotel Metropole. It was there that I met him personally for the first time. For me it was the start of a bond which was to last 25 years. I was fascinated by the charismatic personality of this American who was at ease both with the simplest and with the greatest of this world. He had an extraordinary gift of drawing the best out of those whom he met. He had a vision for the world, but he knew that nothing could be accomplished without people. He was just the opposite of an intellectual, elaborating abstract ideas. For him the future of the world depended on the moral decisions taken by men and women living in the real world.

Having come to Geneva to meet the statesmen gathered at the League of Nations, Frank Buchman did not forget the Genevese. Several meetings took place in the Salle de la Réformation and the Victoria Hall. Invited to meet a delegation of the Federal Government, he went to Bern and was received by the President of the Confederation, Rudolf Minger, and by Federal Councillor Pilet-Golaz. The latter was following with interest the work of the Oxford Group and in 1934 had sent a strong message of support to a meeting at Thun.

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1936 saw mounting dangers. Violating international agreements, Hitler reoccupied the Rhineland. Neither France nor Great Britain had the courage to intervene. Mussolini invaded Ethiopia and turned it into an Italian African colony. In France Léon Blum set up the Popular Front government.

In 1937, after five years of action by the Oxford Group in Switzerland, the national team decided that it was time to speak to the whole country. In the spring a big demonstration took place in the large hall of the Beaulieu Palace in Lausanne, capable of holding more than 10,000 people. Special trains were commissioned to bring Swiss from all parts of the country. The press and the radio gave a very favourable report of this mobilisation of minds.

The social climate had greatly changed in the course of those years. Switzerland was in danger and everyone knew it. The Oxford Group had made an important contribution by helping management and labour to establish a new climate through agreements known as "the industrial peace". This was to make a profound impression on the country. A wave of honesty had led thousands of taxpayers to pay their taxes with greater integrity. Many families had found a new unity.

At that time a handful of outstanding people were giving leadership in the Oxford Group: Alfred Carrard, Professor at the Federal Polytechnic College; Emil Brunner, Professor of Theology at Zurich University; Théophile Spoerri, Professor of French and Italian Literature and later Rector of Zurich University; Paul Tournier, who became a famous doctor and whose books have been translated into a score of languages.

After the Lausanne mass demonstration, with the help of Roger Faure, a French architect who had joined Frank Buchman's international team, I decided to devote all my time

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to this action. I talked it over with the Dean of the Geneva Faculty of Theology, Professor Auguste Gampert. He gave me his blessing, saying, "At last, a Genevese who has the courage to go all the way and follow his convictions." On 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1937 I received a letter from Frank Buchman inviting me to come and see him in the Netherlands to talk over my decision.

As I took my first steps in the heart of the international team there was extreme political tension between the three Axis powers — Germany, Italy and Japan — and the democracies France, Great Britain and the United States. Joseph Stalin's USSR was subtly playing a double game. It was the period of the annexation of Austria. All the great powers were then carrying out intense military rearmament.

For several years Frank Buchman had been gathering his friends from around the world at international meetings in Oxford during the university vacation. I attended one of these meetings and the friendships I formed then were to last all my life. I spent hours with Dr Paul Tournier, who was collecting ideas for his first book, *Médecine de la personne*, translated as *The Healing of Persons*. I met for the first time Jimmy Newton and Charles Haines, two Americans from the industrial life of their country. They came with me to Switzerland to meet some outstanding people in the business world including the President of Nestlé in Vevey, the founder of the Migros supermarket chain, the Managing Director of Von Roll and the President of the Federation of Metal and Watch Industry Workers. These last two men had played a key part in the peace agreement which had been signed in the machine industry.

During that summer our British friends produced a pictorial in the style of the illustrated magazines of the time,

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vividly presenting the Oxford Group's work in the world. It was called *Rising Tide*, and in the autumn we produced French and German editions in Switzerland. We set up our headquarters with the de Trey family in Zurich. Théo Spoerri was supervising the German translation and Roger Faure the French. For several weeks, Morris Martin, Roger Faure and I shuttled between Zurich and Zofingen, where the firm Ringier was to print this magazine.

In 1938 Caux made its first entry on the scene. We had been looking for a hotel to hold a Swiss meeting during the four days of Easter and discovered this establishment, which had gone through many financial difficulties in the 1930s. It had given up the grand name, Caux-Palace, and more modestly called itself Hotel Esplanade. The manager offered to accommodate us for the modest sum of 11 francs a day with full board. It was during this meeting that many of our Swiss friends were to discover this enchanting site overlooking the Lake of Geneva.

In May Frank Buchman was at Freudenstadt in Germany with some of his closest collaborators to rest and reflect on the next steps in the expanding work of the Oxford Group. While he was walking in the forest behind the Hotel Waldlust, an idea imprinted itself on his mind: "What the world needs is a moral and spiritual rearmament of all nations."

He was to celebrate his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday on 4<sup>th</sup> June in London and he decided to make use of this opportunity to launch this appeal publicly. The response was immediate. In the months that followed, statements echoing this theme were published in all corners of the world. Statesmen, monarchs, politicians and men of the media, each and all wanted to lend their support to this idea. It is true that it was in the spirit of the time, for everyone was conscious of the need for the

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democracies to find a force and a dynamism to confront the totalitarian states. While I was in London, Frank Buchman called me to Brown's Hotel, where he had his headquarters, to tell me of his decision to hold a world assembly for Moral Re-Armament in Switzerland. One of his English friends had recommended Interlaken. Frank Buchman asked me to take charge of all the logistics for this meeting, which was to take place for ten days at the beginning of September. He was planning to go on to Geneva to meet delegates of the League of Nations once more.

For the first time Buchman was entrusting me with responsibility for a major operation. I was conscious of the importance of this conference, which was to bring together delegates from all over the world. During the summer political tension constantly increased, for Hitler was determined to take back the Sudetenland, which had been conceded to Czechoslovakia by the Treaty of St Germain in 1919. In fact, the Moral Re-Armament Assembly took place when the Munich agreements were being prepared between France, Great Britain, Germany and Italy. These led to the evacuation of the Sudetenland and its occupation by the German army. Europe was holding its breath, not knowing if war would break out from one day to the next. Finally the compromise accepted by France and Great Britain was received with relief by public opinion. It was thought that war had been averted, but in reality the deal encouraged Hitler in his policy of expansion.

Frank Buchman came to Geneva in mid-September with a strong team. A memorable lunch took place in the Hotel des Bergues attended by several foreign ministers. The Editor of the *Journal de Genève*, Jean Martin, published a supplement dedicated to Moral Re-Armament, which he sent

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with a personal letter to his press colleagues throughout the world.

In the autumn of 1938 Frank Buchman decided that it was time to return to the United States and invited me to join his team for several months.

At Easter 1939 the Swiss met again at Caux. One of the subjects tackled during this session was the change that had occurred in 1938 between the Oxford Group as it had developed in Switzerland since 1932 and the call to moral and spiritual rearmament of nations. This concept upset some of our friends who were unaccustomed to think in such vast dimensions. At the end of April, I embarked for New York on the French ship *Normandie*. The four months I then spent in the United States gave me a first contact with the realities of life in that great country. Living at the heart of Frank Buchman's team, I was privileged to begin to understand from inside the political, social and economic life of America. New York, Washington, Hollywood and San Francisco were to be the principal stages of this initiation.

An intense ideological struggle was being fought. On one side was the isolationist camp who wanted at all costs to keep the country apart from Europe's problems ; on the other were those who weighed the extreme danger of the German and Soviet totalitarian regimes. Marxism had profoundly influenced America's cultural life and President Roosevelt's New Deal had transformed the social and economic policy of the country.

Through meetings with politicians in Washington, with the world of cinema in Hollywood, and with industrialists and trade-unionists, I could take a closer look at some of the problems facing our American friends. At the beginning of August, I left Frank Buchman in San Francisco to return to

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Europe and rejoin Hélène de Trey, my fiancé. We were to be married in September. I did not know then that I would have to wait five long years before meeting him again in the United States.

## The war years

At the end of August 1939, the German-Soviet pact between Hitler and Stalin sounded the death knell for peace. On 1<sup>st</sup> September the German armies invaded Poland. The USSR did the same and despite the heroic resistance of the Poles, attacked on both sides, Poland collapsed in three weeks. In Switzerland, the federal government had decided on general mobilisation of the army and all the men of our team found themselves scattered throughout the country in their different military units. From the Hotel Bristol in Bern, three young women, Lucie Perrenoud, Claire Züst and Marie Liette Pahud, took on the task of keeping us in touch with each other.

From the first day of the war very strict food rationing had been set up under the direction of Arnold Muggli, who was also one of our friends. It meant a fair distribution of the meagre resources of our country to all. In the autumn, Switzerland was the target of an intense German propaganda campaign. We took the initiative in proposing to our three national radio stations — in German, French and Italian — to do a series of simultaneous broadcasts, to strengthen the unity of our people and counteract foreign propaganda. It was on that occasion that Théo Spoerri and I were received by General Guisan, Commander in Chief of our army, at his headquarters at Gumlingen to inform him of our project. He gave us his full support.

I wanted to do my utmost to maintain our links with friends in the rest of Europe. In February 1940 my wife and I

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spent several days in Rome. During this visit Canon de Bavier, Procurator of the Abbey of St Maurice at the Vatican, told me about a German diplomat posted to Bern, who had been in contact with our Moral Re-Armament friends in the United States, and advised me to go and see him. In March I accompanied Gonzague de Reynold, the great Swiss historian, who was to lecture in Paris and in Brussels, and I used the chance to contact our friends in France and Belgium.

General Guisan was very conscious of the importance of the ideological struggle to keep up Switzerland's morale. He soon created the section "Army and Home" at Army Headquarters to carry on this battle. In the spring of 1940 I received the order to join this section and to take responsibility for its programme with the French-speaking troops.

After the winter calm, the German offensive rolled over Europe. One after the other, Denmark and Norway, the Netherlands and Belgium, and finally France fell before the onslaught of the armoured divisions and the Luftwaffe. It was a military disaster. Finally, the armistice demanded by Marshal Pétain was signed on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1940. These events influenced Switzerland profoundly. All our fellow-citizens were conscious of the extreme danger we were in.

During that tragic spring, we took the first steps to create a resistance movement in Switzerland. The first meeting took place in our flat in Bern and Théo Spoerri became our spokesman. The Gothard League was created. It brought together men of all political tendencies who were determined to resist totalitarian attack. Trade-unionists like Charles Ducommun and Emile Giroud worked alongside writers like Denis de Rougemont and Gonzague de Reynold and the well-known agronomist F.C. Wahlen, author of the plan for national self-sufficiency in agriculture during the war.

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One of our first actions was to publish in all the main newspapers full pages appealing to our people not to be discouraged, to remain united and to be ready to resist. In that way we wanted to declare that our country wished to remain faithful to her historic democratic tradition.

In July, on the Rütli meadow, where tradition holds that the original Switzerland was founded in 1291, General Guisan brought together all the senior officers of our army. He wanted to assert the nation's will to resist and to announce the concept of "the national redoubt", which was to become Switzerland's strategy. During the summer of 1940 our section of the General Staff was instructed to explain to all army units this change in our military strategy.

Soon the news filtered through from occupied France that two of my best French friends, Roger Faure and Raymond de Pourtalès had died for their country at the end of May, both in a heroic manner. I was deeply saddened.

During the summer I followed the advice of my friend in Rome and made contact with Herbert Blankenhorn, then counsellor in the German legation in Bern. At the moment when the Third Reich was triumphant on the battlefield, he explained to me why, according to his conviction, Germany was going to lose the war. It was my first contact with one of the men who took part in the German resistance.

In the autumn, Switzerland found herself in a situation of extreme danger. Numerous bodies of German troops were in France, on the other side of the Jura, ready to invade and occupy Switzerland and safeguard for Germany the strategic control of the crossing of the Alps. The moment was favourable for them and one may wonder why our country was not occupied at that time. It is impossible to answer that question. It was certainly not respect for Swiss neutrality or

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for our military preparations. Today it seems most probable that Hitler wanted to keep back all his forces to prepare for the invasion of Soviet Russia and did not follow his General Staff's advice.

In February 1941 I travelled to Lisbon to try and renew direct links with our friends in England and in the United States. I had hoped that Ken Twitchell could join me from America and Roly Wilson from England. Unfortunately this could not be.

On returning from Portugal, I received in Lausanne, where we were then living, a visit from Adam von Trott zu Solz, one of the brains of the German resistance. A few years older than myself, he greatly impressed me. We were on the same wavelength over many problems. During this meeting he asked me if I could consider coming to Berlin to see some of his friends who could not leave Germany.

During Easter 1942 we had gathered at Macolin a number of our MRA friends. Three of our French comrades had succeeded in joining us from the Free Zone of France. During these days an idea came forcibly to my mind: "If Switzerland is spared the war, our task will be to put at Frank Buchman's disposal a place where Europeans, torn by hatred, suffering and resentment, will be able to meet. Caux is the place." This thought was such a surprise that I did not dare to mention it to anyone: "Caux is the place... Caux is the place..."

In November 1942 I took up my pilgrim's staff on a dangerous journey to Berlin, in the heart of what I considered as enemy territory. Officially I was on a study trip to Finland, and Blankenhorn had obtained for me a transit visa through Germany. I made two stops, on the way to and from Helsinki,

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where I stayed 10 days with my friend Heikki Vuoristo, who was also to die in defence of his country in 1944.

One evening when the Royal Air Force was bombarding Berlin, I visited Hans Berndt von Haften, a senior official in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the course of conversation, he asked me if, as a Christian, one had the right to kill Hitler. From that evening on, I knew that a plot followed by a coup d'état was being prepared in Germany to get rid of Hitler and the National-Socialist regime.

In 1943 I joined the Department of Foreign Affairs in Bern in the section preparing for the post-war period, where I worked under Minister Daniel Secrétan.

On 7<sup>th</sup> April 1944 a telegram arrived from the United States, signed by Frank Buchman, Morris Martin and Ken Twitchell, inviting my wife and me to go to the United States to take part in a conference to prepare for the post-war world. Switzerland was at that time gripped in a vice by the Axis powers and it was impossible to go to the United States. However, several days later, when I was on night duty with Federal Councillor Pilet-Golaz, he came to see me in my office about midnight and I showed him the telegram that I had just received. After reading it carefully, he simply said to me, "Why not, Mottu ?"

My boss, Minister Secrétan, was very surprised at Pilet-Golaz's reaction. With some reason, he thought that there was no chance of obtaining the necessary authorisations from the Germans. At the end of April Adam von Trott came to Switzerland ; he immediately seized the opportunity offered by this journey to transmit to Washington secret information about the preparations for the coup d'état. He promised to find a way to get us a special pass to allow us to reach Lisbon. Alan Dulles, head of American secret services in Europe, who

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was living in Bern, promised to book us a passage on the Panam Clipper crossing the Atlantic from Lisbon to New York.

On 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944 the allied troops landed in Normandy. Ten days later, while the battle was raging in the north of France, we embarked in Zürich on an adventurous journey, which was to take us to New York via Stuttgart and Portugal. The stop in Stuttgart allowed me to take in and to learn by heart the information which Adam von Trott and his friends wanted me to transmit to Washington. Three days later, as we left the Lufthansa aircraft in Lisbon, we were received by American agents of the OSS and after a week we landed safely in New York.

The Washington interviews turned out to be very painful. President Roosevelt had adopted a negative attitude towards German resistance and, since the beginning of the war, he had refused to take seriously the reality of this internal opposition to Hitler. In fact the Americans were prisoners of their own propaganda and considered all Germans to be Nazis.

After about ten days in New York and Washington, we rejoined our Moral Re-Armament friends at the conference centre on Mackinac Island in the north of Michigan. Frank Buchman was waiting for us in person and the reunion after those war years was very moving. In 1939 I had left a man overflowing with vitality. Now we found a person recovering from a serious illness which had nearly cost him his life in 1942. What he had lost in activity he had gained in creative thought for others. The months we spent in close fellowship with him in 1944, as the war reached its climax in Europe and in the Pacific, remain etched on our memories.

Moral Re-Armament's action had undergone a profound change in the United States during those war years.

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"Island House", a former hotel, had been put at Frank Buchman's disposal to create a training centre. Everything was taken in hand by our own team. Our friend Elisabeth de Mestral, who did not know how to boil an egg when she left Switzerland, was in charge of a team of cooks, producing day after day simple but delicious meals. A gifted Scottish musician, George Fraser, was conducting a choir. Their repertoire included many original songs, the texts and music of which had been composed by our comrades. As to the theatre, it offered a new way of expressing the ideas of Moral Re-Armament, since Alan Thornhill had written a very successful play, *The Forgotten Factor*.

In July, we were in Chicago when the Democratic Party Convention decided to back President Roosevelt for a fourth term, despite his failing health, with Senator Harry Truman as vice-president. The news of the attempt on Hitler's life reached me there through the press. I was devastated by its failure, for I knew that my German friends in the resistance were now in immense danger. But I was also shocked to note that the American press gave the news as a sundry item of no significance.

During the summer I told Frank Buchman of the thought about Caux which I had had at Macolin in 1942. I was very surprised when he replied, "I know the place, I went there well before you were born." When later we visited his family home in Allentown with Morris Martin, we found among the postcards which Frank Buchman had sent his mother during his travels, a picture of Caux dated 1903, describing how he went up the Rochers de Naye by rack-railway and visited a friend in the afternoon at the Caux-Palace.

At the beginning of December we embarked in a troopship destined for Liverpool. We were part of a convoy of 40

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ships sailing in formation with destroyers of the US Navy as a protective escort. The Atlantic was at that time infested by German submarines. We spent a fortnight in England, first of all at Tirley Garth, then in London and finally in Suffolk, where we were invited by Peter and Doë Howard to their farm. This was our first meeting with them. The German counter-offensive in the Ardennes was then taking place and we could see in the sky the squadrons taking part in the battle or going to bomb Germany.

In January 1945 I travelled again to Sweden to contact our Scandinavian friends and to try to get news of my German friends. It was there that I learned that Adam von Trott and Hans Berndt von Haften had been condemned to death on 15<sup>th</sup> August and that they had been hanged like common criminals and their bodies displayed in an infamous manner.

Back in England at the beginning of February we were privileged to take one of the first trains to link London and Paris again. In the French capital Marcel and Simone Roy invited us to their fine apartment in the Rue de Camoens with all our French friends to hear the account of our unusual journey. We saw again many familiar faces, in particular Robert and Diane de Watteville, whose son François had fallen for France in June 1940. Rail connections with Geneva had not yet been re-established and we returned to Switzerland in a car lent us by the Swiss Legation with petrol provided by the US Air Force.

The reunion with our two small daughters after eight months' absence was marvellous. Trudi Trüssel and Lucie Perrenoud, supported by my mother and Hélène's parents, had taken great care of our children. At Easter 1945 all our Swiss team met in the Hotel des Salines at Bex to listen to the account of our experiences. On 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945 the armistice

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was signed. The war in Europe was over, but first the two atomic bombs would be dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the beginning of August before the surrender of Japan and the end of hostilities.

## After the war

After eight months' absence I resumed my work in the Department of Foreign Affairs in Bern. Pilet-Golaz had retired in December. The Federal Parliament had appointed in his place Max Petitpierre, whom I had known during the war through my contacts with the Gothard League. In the spring of 1945 shortly after the meeting at Bex, I had the compelling thought to give up my ambition of a diplomatic career. With my wife's support, I decided to hand in my resignation so as to devote myself wholly to the work of Moral Re-Armament.

The idea then arose of renting a hotel to bring together all our friends for several weeks and to set up a sort of "Miniature Mackinac". It was to be in the same spirit that we had experienced the previous summer in the United States. A meeting at the Grimmelalp, in the valley of the Simmental, was to weld our team in an entirely new way.

Now that the war was over, Frank Buchman was eager to bring together at Mackinac our whole world force to reflect on the next stage. I would very much have liked Théo Spoerri, with whom I had worked closely during the war, to accompany us, but this was not possible. In the end, there were eight people in the Swiss delegation : Robert Hahnloser, Erich and Emmy Peyer, Lucie Perrenoud, Madeleine Burnier, Charles and Yvonne Ducommun and myself.

Transport to the United States was jammed by the return of American GIs and it was extremely difficult to cross the Atlantic. Our group set off at the beginning of August on a

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first stage to Paris. There, with the help of Maurice Nosley, we had to get permission from the American Army to travel to the United States. After many vicissitudes, the various delegations from Europe met at the end of August in Mackinac, where we were to spend two extraordinary months together. For the first time Peter Howard met Frank Buchman in person. During those months was formed the Swiss trio — Robert Hahnloser, Erich Peyer and Philippe Mottu — which became the pillar of Caux.

Robert and I were to spend six months together in America. Our wives, Dorli and Hélène, were each expecting a baby and had stayed in Switzerland. Robert's father died in October and, to my great surprise, he decided to stay on with us. We were to be far away when our two sons were born, but we each felt that we had to prepare for a great task, the rebuilding of Europe, torn by hatred, bitterness and suffering.

At the beginning of January 1946 we were in Los Angeles, California, when a moving piece of news reached me from my wife. Claritta von Trott, the widow of Adam von Trott of the German resistance, had just spent some days in our home with her children. After the end of hostilities, we had immediately tried to discover where she was and had heard that she had been imprisoned for some time and separated from her children. It was a relief to know that she was now free and safe.

In February, Robert and I were back in Switzerland to prepare for an Easter gathering with our European friends. We wanted to bring them together in Interlaken, scene of the first Moral Re-Armament assembly in 1938.

In March, a letter from Ken Twitchell informed us that Frank Buchman had decided to return to Europe with a strong team. He hoped to arrive in England at the end of April and

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expected to come to Switzerland in August or September for a world assembly. Robert Hahnloser was at that time on military service in central Switzerland and I went to see him to decide with him what steps to take. We had three possible places to hold such an assembly in mind : Interlaken, the Bürgenstock or Caux. The contacts with the first two fell through. For me there was no doubt that Caux was the place.

At the beginning of April Hélène and I set off from Bern to go up to Caux. Walking along the lengthy front of the Caux-Palace, I wondered what we would find. Everything was empty, without a living soul. Finally I came across the caretaker of the property, Robert Auberson. He told us of the mishaps of Caux during the war and informed us that the hotel now belonged to the Swiss Popular Bank in Montreux. Without waiting a moment, I went to see the manager of the Bank. I discovered that the building was for sale and that he was negotiating with a French company who wanted to buy it. On 11<sup>th</sup> April I wrote to Frank Buchman in Washington to report on what we had discovered. There was naturally a fundamental difference between renting a hotel for a two-month assembly or buying a hotel to turn it into what I called in my letter "a Swiss Mackinac".

The European meeting in Interlaken went on for two weeks in April and exceeded everything we had hoped for. More than 600 people took part and found fresh inspiration after the war years. 180 people from France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark and Italy met with more than 400 Swiss. Thanks to the help of the Chaplain-General of the French Army of Occupation, it was possible to welcome the first four Germans. Several officers of the Army of Occupation in Germany and in Austria also took part in this meeting.

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On 28<sup>th</sup> April I wrote again to Frank Buchman to tell him that negotiations were advancing and that we had to give a definitive reply to the Bank by Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> May at midnight. I confirmed that Robert, Erich and I were convinced that it was a unique opportunity. A few days later, I had a phone call in Interlaken from Frank Buchman. Having left New York, his ship had just arrived at Southampton. He expressed his agreement over buying the Caux-Palace. He asked me if the Swiss were ready to pay for it. Calmly, but trembling, I replied : yes. It was for me an act of faith, a leap into the unknown. The next day I took to the manager of the Swiss Popular Bank in Montreux a cheque for 100,000 francs, which gave us priority over the other possible buyer.

The Mayor of Montreux, Albert Mayer, the Chairman of the Board of the Caux Property Company, Lucien Chessex, whose father had founded the Caux-Palace, the publisher of the *Journal de Montreux* and the managing director of the Rochers de Naye railway had urged the Bank to give preference to our plan. The final negotiation of the contract took place in Bern on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1946 with the General Manager of the Swiss Popular Bank, Mr. Hadorn. The French group had offered 1,250,000 francs. They meant to strip the Caux-Palace of all its furnishings and fittings. The hotel would have become an empty shell, a ruin.

Robert Hahnloser and I had negotiated to get a more favourable price, saying that our aim was to help to rebuild Europe and that the Bank could take part in this. I told Hadorn that we were ready to accept the price which he, in the depth of his heart, thought we should pay. After a silence which seemed to me an eternity, he named his final price : 1,050,000 francs to be paid on 31<sup>st</sup> December with an initial instalment of 450,000 francs at the end of June. For the

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record, one must add that the construction and equipment of the Caux-Palace had cost more than 6 million francs in gold at the beginning of the century. The following weekend we invited all our Swiss friends to Interlaken to bring them up to date with the situation. The response of our comrades was unforgettable. About one hundred Swiss made costly sacrifices to find the sum necessary for the purchase of Caux and at the end of June we were in a position to pay the first instalment to the Bank.

Robert Hahnloser went straight up to Caux and brought together a team from all parts of Switzerland and Europe to clean, paint, equip and set in order this huge house which had to be ready to receive Frank Buchman. At the beginning of June I went to London with Hélène to see him. On his birthday I presented him in the name of the Swiss with a symbolic key to the house on the mountain. There and then we proposed that the Caux-Palace should henceforth be called Mountain House in gratitude for all that we had received during our stay at Island House in Mackinac. In mid-July Frank Buchman arrived at Caux, followed shortly afterwards by a team of 150 from London. This first international gathering enabled many friends from all over the world to meet and think together about the future. Frank Buchman was very keen that Germany should be well represented, but during that first year it was only possible to receive about 15 Germans.

During that first summer at Caux, Frank Buchman received a visit from a prince of a royal family who had taken refuge during the war in Montreux. As he was accompanying him to the door of Mountain House, his friend pointed to the Grand Hotel and asked if it also belonged to Moral Re-Armament ; looking intently at me, Frank Buchman replied, "Not yet." After a few months, Robert started negotiating to

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acquire the Grand Hotel, while Emmanuel de Trey decided to buy the Hotel Maria and offer it to Moral Re-Armament.

When the conference was over we started work on important changes at Mountain House. The ballroom of the Caux-Palace was transformed into a theatre. The Mayor of Morges, Alfred André, offered to refurbish the entrance hall at his own expense using local materials. He made it what it is still today. A master ironworker from Bulle, Willy Brandt, created a magnificent candelabra of wrought iron for its lighting.

Through our buying the shares of the Caux Property Company, we became owners of the Catholic church. I contacted the bishop, Mgr François Charrière, whom I had known since 1937, and arranged with him to have a chaplain at Caux during the conferences. It has always been my hope that the Caux chapel would one day be dedicated to Nicolas de Flue, Switzerland's peacemaker saint. Robert Hahnloser and I had signed the purchase contract for Caux and it was now necessary to find a legal basis for this property. In Lausanne I consulted the de Trey family's lawyer. He suggested creating a Foundation for Moral Re-Armament. The memorandum and articles were drafted with great care. Then we had to approach the Vaud government to have it recognised as of public benefit and exempt from taxes on gifts, which were often made from great sacrifice. The Federal Department of the Interior was designated as the supervising authority.

The first Council of the Foundation, formed in 1946, consisted of Robert Hahnloser, Erich Peyer, Konrad von Orelli, my old friend Jules Rochat and myself as President.

In the spring of 1947 we made contact with Dr Hans Schönfeld, whom we had met in Stuttgart with Adam von Trott in June 1944. We asked him to prepare a list of

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responsible Germans to be invited to the summer conference. Together we listed the names of 150 people : comrades of the German resistance, politicians and pressmen, industrialists and trade unionists.

Our Minister of Foreign Affairs, Max Petitpierre, gave orders to the Swiss consulates to grant free entry visas to our country. It was essential, however, to get permission from the occupation authorities in Germany for Germans to be able to leave their country. Ken Twitchell undertook steps in Washington and, through his father-in-law, Senator Alexander Smith, met President Truman's Secretary of State, General Marshall, who gave the needed directives to General Clay in Germany. It was the same with Lord Pakenham, responsible for the British occupation zone.

Already during the war I had become convinced that Franco-German reconciliation would be the key to the future of Europe. During the first years of Caux, between 1946 and 1950, more than 5,000 French and Germans met at Mountain House. In 1947 Clarita von Trott spent two months at Caux. She met Irène Laure, President of the Socialist women of France and member of the Constituent Assembly, who had developed during the war years a fierce hatred against the Germans. The contact between these two women produced a spark which was one of the elements setting off an irreversible process leading to the historic reconciliation between France and Germany.

In the course of the same year, Erich and Emmy Peyer formed a lasting friendship with Konrad Adenauer and his family and unsparingly gave their best to Germany. In 1937 I had met at Oxford a Japanese from one of the great families of his country, Takasumi Mitsui. In 1948 I met him again in the United States with a first group of Japanese who had been

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invited by Frank Buchman to take part in a Moral Re-Armament meeting in California. At the beginning of 1950, Ken Twitchell and Basil Entwistle went to Japan at the invitation of Mitsui and his friends. In a few months they prepared a remarkable Japanese delegation of 70 representative people, who came to Caux for three weeks in July. With General MacArthur's authorisation to leave Japan, they had been received by Prime Minister Yoshida. He had declared that their mission was as important as the one which had opened Japan to the west in 1874. At the end of this historic visit, to thank the Swiss for their hospitality, the Mayor of Hiroshima presented me with a cross carved from a camphor tree which had survived the atomic bomb.

In the spring of the same year, Robert Hahnloser, with whom I had been working hand in hand, was suddenly taken from us. He died in his sleep, when we were about to leave the next day for Rome to see Frank Buchman. He was 42 years old. It was a very great trial for his wife Dorli and their four young sons. For me, it was a heartbreak after five years of intense work together. We complemented each other and took all our decisions together.

Those five years, however, had seen the first stage of the Caux centre completed. Moral Re-Armament possessed an instrument which has proved itself priceless over the last 50 years.

## The century to come

To round off my story, may I say a word to the younger generation, the under thirties? At the end of the Second World War we faced a colossal challenge. To answer it, we gave ourselves with everything we had. On the way we made many mistakes, but what matters is not success but the

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determination to try to answer the real problems of the people of our time. In less than four years you will be at the dawn of a new millennium. What have the next 50 years in store for you? It is difficult to foresee the future and yet right now we can detect the outlines of the challenge which you will have to face.

Even if the demographic increase slows down, the population of our planet is probably going to double and reach 10 to 12 thousand million human beings in the middle of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The consciousness of the limits of our planet is going to force your generation to manage responsibly the finite resources of air, water, earth and what lies beneath it.

Asia will carry enormous weight and great countries such as India, China, Indonesia and Japan will exercise a major influence on the world.

Since the birth-rate of European countries is below the average, there will probably be large transfers of population from other continents to Europe. The development of the telephone world-wide and of the personal computer will produce an extraordinary spread of knowledge and information. It will serve as a foundation for a more active and responsible society, leading to new structures of democracy.

Our century has made a cult of the rights of man, the 21<sup>st</sup> will have to place the emphasis on everyone's responsible share in society. The status of women, which began to change in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, will doubtless reach its fulfilment in the course of the next century.

Ethnic, religions and economic conflicts will multiply. Your generation will have to learn to bridge the gulfs which separate people and to heal the wounds, so as to forge a future

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for the generations after yours. Often, as I think of my grandchildren's future, it distresses me to see so many difficulties pile up. Yet when I reflect on the way in which we have been led step by step in the course of our lives, I am full of hope for yours. According to André Malraux's prophecy, the coming century will see, I hope with all my heart, the return to spiritual values, which is indispensable for the progress of humanity.

Let me wish you a fair wind for this great voyage of the next 50 years. God bless you !

(translated by W.W. Stallybrass ; corrected and edited by A.B. Stallybrass)