

# REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

## Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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MOUNTAIN HOUSE  
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Monday, 31st July, 1995

Dear friends,

The moment of truth can no longer be delayed. The cup of hot tea is at my elbow, the window open, with fresh air streaming in, the cobwebs in my mind are being blown away. It's Monday again, the last of July. The close shaved wheat fields down the hill are now bare but for giant gold draughtsmen of straw, and the close-ranked regiments of dark green maize-corn now wait for their assault from the harvester. The season gallops on - and the Caux summer sessions with it.

An inconvenient Monday, since the last session finished after my last letter, so I have to take you back through a time-warp, the air-lock into the recent past. The organisers of the 'Society of Tomorrow' session are still digesting their experience, and so are we, with a feeling that this was a landmark. 'Well-prepared doesn't mean no surprises,' was one evaluation. 'A water-mark in maturity,' said another, while a third commented on the integrity of the quest for truth. The organisers made up a community of friends - and the conference was a bye-product, commented one. Hugh Williams described the closing 'cultural evening' as 'the best prepared, most disciplined, least self-indulgent, least chaotic, and therefore most enjoyable evening of its kind' in his not inconsiderable experience of Caux. And indeed that comment could be applied to the session as a whole.

At the closing meeting on Wednesday morning, a young Bosnian spoke 'for those in the front line, who can't speak to you' of the forgiveness without barriers that springs from love. He himself had been involved in the fighting and had lost close friends, but he went on, 'We must not hate and imitate the hate of others, revenge is against God.' One of the organisers, a plant biologist, spoke of the old compost of the conference now coming to the end of its life, and the new life germinating within it. He spoke of 'a remade decision to live out the best, the most intoxicating kind of life'. My own mother expressed the hope that the grannies of the world will care for people in Caux. 'The light gets brighter as you go along - and we can say that at over 80,' she concluded.

The simple stage-flat backdrop in the bay window was lowered at the end, and a chorus of 30 sang 'God is watching us' as the sun streamed in. Then more participants came up to say what the time had meant to them. An older Englishman said that he had unconsciously wanted to put the clock back on the multi-racial society developing before his eyes in his own country. He apologised to the people of other races for the secret barrier that he'd put up in his heart. A German from the former Democratic Republic recalled the peaceful demonstrations in Leipzig in 1989, in which he had taken part. This gave hope that a peaceful revolution was possible in the world. He talked about the current

problems of an 'elbow society, where materialism is rampant', and noted that true success in life came from the application of values. 'I feel simply shattered,' said another of the organisers, naming the refugee children with whom she works, 'but I think it's what's needed for love to come through the cracks. I can be silent before pain, and believe that there's a love stronger than my love that can come through me.'

We also struggle to evaluate this year's Caux Round Table (CRT) meeting, the 10th consecutive year in Caux. There were 31 senior participants, including 8 for the first time, among them the Chairman of Time Inc. We may need reminding of how revolutionary it is for such men and women to meet to discuss how to build a just, fair and secure world society. A director of the main financial newspaper in Japan, another 'first-timer', said he'd never met a group of business leaders so sincerely committed to putting wrongs right and solving the problems of the age. It had proved to be a culture shock to his scepticism. Of course there was discussion and planning to see how the CRT 'principles for business' can be applied and further made known.

Now we are well-launched, since Friday evening, into the 'Caux conference for Business and Industry', with the theme 'Business and Industry - an agent of positive social change'. To look round the dining-room, you might think that you were in a family conference. There are many children and young people, and few suits and ties. The session opened with a clear expression of the tension between staggering technological progress and growing social concerns. Jean-Loup Dherse, a former vice-president of the World Bank, and retiring President of the CRT steering committee, spoke of the sometimes 'poisonous gift' of technology, when only 1% can master it, and 99% are excluded. Humility and realism were needed in handling change. 'There is an economic cost to wrong purposes,' he warned. An employer who had had to cut his work force by half over recent years to survive and ride with the tide of technological change anguished over the question 'who's caring for those without jobs, with no hope of a job?' Clearly this will be one of the themes dominating the 8 different 'forums' meeting in the afternoons for people involved in business and industry, and a theme linking with the morning community meetings, which include all the others in the house too.

On the same evening as the opening, there was a head table in the main dining room, with all the finest crystal, china and cutlery, to honour the 25 or so teenagers who had put so much into the production of 'The Silver Thread', the musical collage of Kathleen Dodds-Johnson's music, and into these first weeks of the conferences. All dressed up in their best, they were served by a team of their seniors, in great style, to the surprise and puzzlement of many: the senior industrial-business figures grandly installed in the middle of the dining room looked rather young! Then yesterday, Sunday, many of the same young people (with the help of some oldies like myself) served all the dining room in 'family style', doing away for the day with the usual buffet of recent years.

August greetings as we seek a second wind for the coming weeks,

Andrew Stallybrass