

Moving Forward to Basics

A Report from the Keswick to Caux Journey
June 17th – July 9th, 2008

Keswick, England
Oxford, England
Visby, Sweden
Freudenstadt, Germany
Caux, Switzerland

Traveling Group

Jeong Yeon-Yuk (Korea)
Pilar Griffin (Costa Rica)
Christina DeAngelis (Australia)
Diana Damsa (Romania)
Mike Murphy (UK)
Selly Wane (Senegal)
Alea Tarasenco (Moldova)
Chris Breitenberg (USA)
Tatiana Minbaeva (Russia)
Fiona Daukes (UK)
Akihiro Tanaka (Japan)
Niketu and Christine Iralu (India)
Jean and Mike Brown (UK/Australia)
Peter Thwaites (Australia)

Howard Grace (UK) Keswick to Visby
Angela Starovoytova (Ukraine) Visby to Caux

July 2008

Caux, Switzerland

Dear Friends,

The hallmark of our age is impermanence. Restlessness and fear follow from job to job, relationship to relationship and displaced people's camp to displaced people's camp. The structures of church and state seem impotent, fixed points of faith and family appear fixed no more, food and water are finite and Planet Earth herself may be approaching her 'use by' date.

IofC is a movement for global people change. Only a radical new paradigm for our living and thinking can ensure life and peace. A new climate in human relationships is both possible and essential.

The issue used to be about the quality of life. Now increasingly it is about life itself.

The ideas underlying Initiatives of Change offer sustainable relationships and renewable resources for global social transformation. The resources of the spirit and Divine direction have hardly begun to be tapped. They are infinite. Moral values point to how we can live and work together in partnership with earth, and they are inexhaustible.

In Visby, Sweden, 70 years ago, Frank Buchman spoke of a movement of moral and spiritual re-armament as war was looming. But certainties of religion, family life and nature's bounty then were largely unquestioned. Abuses of power have always been present, doubt and dysfunction always part of the human condition; but they were aberrations. Now they are the norm.

Buchman called for revolutionary living. That is still relevant. Speaking then to a majority Christian audience he suggested that all needed an experience of the Cross of Christ. This experience is available to all, of every and no religion. Its essence is echoed in different expressions through the ages. It is the experience of a transcendental encounter that goes beyond religion and culture. Christ and all that he represented belong to the whole of humanity. It is a personal encounter with truth and love. It invites surrender.

In Keswick, 100 years ago, this encounter resulted in Buchman finding wholeness and liberation. His "I too was wrong" conviction can be the conviction of parents and politicians; of economists and environmentalists; historians, students and social workers; priests and counselors as we all, for the first time in human history share in responsibility and together admit, "We too are wrong....have got it wrong". This point of surrender is the start of a whole new journey. The divided heart of humanity can become whole.

Hopefully,

Jean Brown

Moving Forward to Basics

'To restore a commonplace truth to its first uncommon lustre, you need only translate it into action.' -
Samuel Taylor Coleridge -

Settings illustrate the background and inspire the foreground. The stillness of Lake Derwent Water along stone beaches and soft green hills paints a picture of reflection and calm. A thousand spires shooting into the Oxford sky signal the significance of history, knowledge and study. The open and seemingly boundless sea thrives with opportunity. Endless Gotland sunsets inspire and the open-air cathedrals of Visby invite a greater presence to dwell within. The rolling hills of the Black Forest hold the memories of intense conflict and miraculous reconciliation. Spectacular vistas from the terrace of Mountain House serve visions for the future.

In the view of these unique and important settings, a team of 17, spanning half a century, joined together; a community emerging from a group of individuals.

Unique experiences shaped our travel and development. We packed six to a room in an overnight ferry and shared morning quiet time in the ship's bar. We picked up a Danish teammate at the seaport, tried pickled herring in Scandanavia and tangled over conference presentations on long bus rides. We sang a song for our coach driver in a car park and held close to one another when icy Swedish winds chilled our bones. When we got lost in Vaxjo at 1:00 in the morning, some from our team picked us up and guided us to the hostel. When the doomed podcasting equipment had to traverse another border or the weighty video camera overburdened during a lake circumnavigation, someone always helped to carry the load. When openness was needed, there was a response; when wisdom was in short supply, someone shared. Our oldest hopped in the cart and loaded bags onto the Alpine train up to Caux; our youngest served tirelessly to cook conference meals and report plenary sessions. We gave and we received. We became a community.

The generous spirit that welcomed us to each new site and sent us joyfully on our way filled our souls. We depended on far more than ourselves, as teams and individuals sacrificed greatly to turn this vision into a reality. Through the internet, extranet and myriad phone calls we felt the support of many who carried this journey with their hearts, prayers and pocketbooks even from thousands of miles away. We're incredibly grateful for that care. Without it, this invaluable trip could never have occurred.

The Coleridge quotation seemed the recurring challenge on the journey. Though it would have been great to arrive in Caux with new truths, shared visions, plans of action, we sensed that the breakthroughs we need might come simply from translating truths we all know into action. And that would convey its own message and spawn new initiatives. As Buchman said at Garmisch in 1949, MRA/ IofC involves 'a definiteness of experience directly observable... but not easily describable... (nor) joinable. You have to experience it for yourself'. The result, he said, was 'a recovery of confidence, freedom and spontaneity of thought, will and nerve' – all the things we want for our fellowship.

A special energy is generated when these common truths are actioned in an

intergenerational, cross-cultural group such as we had on the journey. Isn't this part of a compelling message: people of difference joyfully learning, growing and acting together working in teams? When Buchman set out on his first mission with six young men in 1924, that was his vision – a team whose quality of life would carry its own message.

The result of this trip manifested in changed lives: A small accountability group that committed together to three months of quiet time ; four apologies that reframed relationships and set new courses for their respective futures; the renewal of conviction to work across generations and to build bridges of trust within IofC; The widespread return to that simple truth that change in the world starts with change in ourselves and the radical call to action contained therein.

Each individual on the Keswick to Caux trip had experiences as diverse as their character, culture and stage in life. Their personal thoughts are what follows in this report, each voice drawing on the many gems of experience and insight that filled our journey. Despite their differences, they are all stories of change – the common thread that addresses the needs in our lives, the IofC network and the world we seek to engage.

The trip was an opportunity to move forward to basics: Reflecting on the past, manifesting those truths by changing the present and looking ahead with a solid foundation and world to serve.

Chris Breitenberg

Niketü Iralu, Nagaland, India

'Buchman stressed change, rather than reconciliation. His aim was never to mediate but to change lives so that those divided could unite as life-changers in their situation.' - Archie Mackenzie -

Frank Buchman concentrated his best attention on inspiring and helping people get connected with themselves at the deepest levels of their souls and consciences. With people from conflicts and wars, this resulted in reconciliation and healing of wounds and divisions through apologies, forgiving of one another, and the birth of mutual trust and cooperation. As one quite deeply involved in my people's search for reconciliation and unity, this is the point that impinged on me the most from this journey. Discussions and strategies for mediation and peace are important to start with. But conflicts, distrust and violence that prevent the growth of societies end only when people are inspired and helped to change, and they discover a purpose of life that gives them hope. I really want to learn to do this properly.

Christine Iralu, India

Renewed conviction to share with younger generations.

The Keswick to Caux journey was precious and unique. I was reassured and convinced that "the experience" at Keswick and the "work of MRA/IofC" of which we are a part, is adding to a long line of goodness and truth in the world, being built upon by people of faith and obedience, generation after generation.

The younger ones on our journey, in particular, with their eagerness and conviction, were an inspiration to me. I recall all that was shown to us during our youth by an older generation to nurture our growth in faith. I feel I have not done enough in turn to nurture the younger generation. It is mainly because of a fear I have that they no longer want such a challenge. But it was happening on this journey – the same depth of training and sharing we experienced. I return home with a renewed conviction that I need to use my time and attention to find the best ways of passing on what means most to me.

Chris Breitenberg, USA

"I hang my life on the line like an old shirt and let the wind of the spirit blow through it."

In Keswick, I was introduced as the person that most closely resembled Frank Buchman when he visited England in 1908. At first, I didn't like this and I felt the uneasy pressure of comparison. But it provided me with a good lens through which to view Buchman's Keswick experience. I was his age and we shared much in common. Both young, convicted and prideful.

In Keswick, Frank experienced God's love in a profound way. He saw that he had put his own ambitions first and that this arrogance blocked his ability to serve and love others.

Years later, he used an image to show his change of heart: "I hang my life on the line like an old shirt and let the wind of the spirit blow through it."

For three days of activities I thought about this image. I walked around Lake Derwent Water, I listened to Archie MacKenzie and Imam Sajid, and I even facilitated a wrap-up session. At the end of it, I realized that I was living with so much pride that it was hard for the spirit to use me. My ego was a burden that left me heavy and unable to reach my potential. I've been living more like a big rock on the line, not an old shirt. So I've made a commitment to trust God each day and to work diligently to shed my ego so that I can stay connected to the line of truth and available to the wind of the spirit.

Mike Murphy, United Kingdom

A chance visit changed his whole outlook on life.

For me it has been important to realise that 100 years ago Frank Buchman was simply a thirty year old guy with a chip on his shoulder who was wandering around Keswick thinking that his life's work was over. Then a chance, impulsive visit to an unremarkable little church in Keswick [now converted into a family home] changed his whole outlook on life.

Being 32 years old I can appreciate these almost accidental first steps of his. The knowledge, insight and clarity I have gained on this trip have been important steps. They have enabled and prepared me to joyfully commit to the challenge of a daily "morning watch".

Jeong Yeon-Yuk, Korea

Are we ready and confident to ask young people to give their lives?

I expected to find a vision from the Keswick to Caux journey that was big enough so we, Koreans, can work all together. But I newly realized and found something unexpected in Keswick. There were two things that struck me quite strongly. Buchman was not on projects or programs but on people; and not mediation or reconciliation but change – change which brings reconciliation. Both thoughts have stayed with me from Keswick to Oxford, Visby and Freudenstadt.

I have been telling people that I have been working full-time with IofC for the last 10 years. But I suddenly felt I have been doing something different than what Buchman was trying to do because I was more on projects and programs instead of people and more on mediation and reconciliation instead of change. Now I have got to change the whole direction with the work of IofC in Korea.

Mother Teresa once said, 'Don't ask young people to give their weekends but ask them to give their lives'. As I understand, Buchman asked people to give their lives. I wonder whether we have been asking people to give their free time instead of their lives.

Are we ready and confident to ask young people to give their lives?

Akihiro Tanaka, Japan

As one of the fruits of this trip, I have decided to practice the quiet time every morning

I found Keswick a very beautiful town. The church where Frank Buchman had the first experience of revelation was located on the edge of the town without any indication of Buchman or Moral Re-Armament, which was a disappointment for me. Moreover, the building is now not used as a church but as housing apartments. But the age has changed, and his charismatic presence and leadership exist no more. Considering the great work done by him and MRA in the 20th century, I could not but feel that it was inappropriate that his name is so little known.

However, episodes and memories of Buchman's experience conveyed to us in Keswick, Oxford and Visby by those who followed and worked alongside him made me feel closer to Frank Buchman. Being a Buddhist, I share all the moral standards that Frank Buchman urged us to observe. I have appreciated Christians taking their faith seriously and thinking of the world more than just personal salvation. Many Buddhists tend to understand their teachings for the personal development of mind and go no further. As one of the fruits of this trip, I have decided to practice the quiet time every morning, starting with a three-month commitment together with other friends met at Visby.

Alea Tarasenco, Moldova

"Put the value of a person before projects."

I am grateful for the possibility to come back to the roots and get the initial message of Frank Buchman through people who worked with him. Such phrases as: "From man to man, rather from plan to plan", "Put the value of a person before projects", "Keep it simple", "... being wonderfully lead to people who are ready..." would have been very helpful in the long meetings I've had sometimes in my organization at home.

Also, I began to appreciate more the value of quiet time. Not that I didn't know of its importance before, but it was like an action I had to force myself to perform. Now, I have the feeling of the inner need to do it.

Lastly, the historical context of Oxford in 1921 (when the Oxford group started) was as relevant as ever. In her lecture, Dr. Mary Innes expressed the diseases of the society after the First World War in terms of disillusionment (hopelessness), dishonesty (lack of integrity in leadership) and meaninglessness (as war didn't bring the long-awaited peace). It struck me that in our world today, and in my society in transition after the Soviet Union break-up, we have the same diseases: the freedom of the market economy didn't bring happiness, corruption flourishes as integrity (especially among public functionaries) is as rare as water in the desert and there is this deep sense of meaninglessness as people don't believe that everyone matters and that they can make a change. It strengthened my conviction that Buchman's message is still relevant, perhaps more relevant than ever.

Peter Thwaites, Australia

Solid Foundations Rediscovered

Buchman's message still challenges: to accept the burden of the world's needs; to trust God entirely and obey him confidently in everything; to live not self-centredly but for others. For him this meant following Christ's way of the Cross, the way to true liberation.

My feeling at the end of the three weeks is one of solid foundations rediscovered. These are the legacy we have inherited from Buchman.

To have made the journey with a multi-generational group coming from every continent, representing different faiths and facing the same challenges together made me feel that God's work never ends, must always be rediscovered and will always be sustainable.

Selly Wane, Senegal

Do I want to give a new impulse to my relationships, even if it takes a lot of energy?

On our KestoCaux journey I realized my tendency to react to people. I would react nicely to "nice people" and get angry, or even worse just ignore those I didn't feel naturally linked with. One great teaching I've gotten out of KestoCaux is Buchman's incredible ability (even though it was an acquired ability) to stretch his heart and let everybody have a place in it. Those he liked, those who lived in a completely different world, and those who hurt him as well.

Realizing this deeply moved me and I had to ask myself over days and days: Do I want to give a new impulse to my relationships, even if it takes a lot of energy to keep them alive, even if I don't necessarily feel any need for it, and even if it sometimes feels like a bother? To me the only answer, even though it's very difficult to carry is 'yes, I want to'. I want to learn how to become full hearted and live a positive meaningful life. Now I will have to keep challenging myself on that.

Pilar Griffin, Costa Rica/USA

Working from heart to heart

'I too was wrong.' Frank Buchman's words of awareness had great impact changing his life. Well, they have also changed mine. Awareness by taking action to apologize gives us freedom; the freedom that allows us to move on. IofC is a movement of people with the desire to create a better world starting with oneself, but how do I do that? I joined this traveling group because I admire the 'power and charisma' of Frank Buchman to engage others. I want to learn to value quiet time, encounter many, get inspired, share and start what FB considered the most important work in the world today: I want to work from heart to heart.

Howard Grace, UK

We need to forge a united battlefield, not necessarily with those who use the same terminology, but with those who respond to that deeper inner leading.

On the Keswick journey we understood that Buchman's, "I too was wrong" revelation was encompassed in a Christian belief and setting. But could people of other religions and 'non-believers' also come to a realisation of "I too was wrong", say sorry, and this lead to freedom of spirit and maybe some sort of transforming experience?

I can find a common heart with Selly (a Muslim) who was on our journey. Also with some people of other religions who believe in God. But there are some fellow Christians whose perception of God I can't relate to. (And them to me, no doubt.) So the dividing line is not simply one of belief in 'God'. Also there are a number of spiritually motivated non-believers who I find I do have an identity of heart with. So I see the question of an understanding of Buchman's experience by those who are non-religious as not primarily about belief in God.

I also believe that those of us who have religious affiliations need to accept that spiritual growth doesn't necessarily involve belief in God. For some it clearly does. But for others the path may be more akin to the Buddhist path towards enlightenment. Many who don't believe in God will respond to the "Something Great." We need to forge a united battlefield, not necessarily with those who use the same terminology, but with those who respond to that deeper inner leading.

Buchman was a young, evangelical Christian minister. He knew all the teachings about Jesus. He was nevertheless burdened by his hatred of those six men who had thwarted his aspirations. He was doubtless struggling to find a way forward. But the experience he had at Keswick came as a gift, a revelation, rather than as a decision. He had a deep mystical experience (rather like St Paul). Few of us have them to that intensity. But on our various levels, and from our different beliefs, we should all live so as to be sensitive to any inner promptings that we may unexpectedly be given. That is the path to transformation, both personal and of society.

Tatiana Minbaeva, Russia

"No-one can be wholly controlled by God who works alone. It is to a willing group of men and women that God speaks most clearly." - Frank Buchman -

What a great challenge for the person like me who, whether taking personal responsibility for IofC or in everyday life, tends to think she may be the 'one' to get work done and problems solved, the 'one' for God to talk to. But, of course, I realize God's 'talking' doesn't stop with me either.

'Willing group' – a group willing to listen, together and individually, listen to inner voice and each other equally, and search for the truth in unity (unity in listening) and diversity (the diversity we all represent). It is a common challenge for all IofC 'teams' and 'groups' around

the world to see how we work together, moreover how we become a 'willing group'? To see if there is something we have to let go of, if there is something or someone we feel particularly difficult to work with? Are we willing to listen? Am I willing to listen? Although involved in different IofC activities and projects for five years, I did not spend time regularly listening. But we all agree it is very important. I am grateful now to be a part 'QT challenge club' formed at Visby conference, to share this challenge together with other 'willing to listen' individuals, and to be accountable and make a 'willing group' experiment! Anybody willing to join?

Angela Starovoytova, Ukraine

Climate change in human relationships

I joined the Keswick to Caux group in Visby, Sweden. The only feeling that I had was that going for it was the right thing to do. In Visby, our group was asked to prepare a session on 'Climate Change in Human Relationships', which I gladly took on. Clarity about the topic (as well as the whole journey) came to me only during the session itself.

There is a Climate and a Weather in human relationships. The weather depends on the climate and is ruled by it.

I was caught by surprise with Frank Buchmans' thought about 'nursing ill-will' and its relevance in my life. Ill-will is one of the factors creating the climate in human relationships at all levels. Oh, God, I was nursing it well. No wonder that even my mom told me that I had become 'bitchy'.

Continuing with the journey another discovery was made. Instead of ill-will, one can nurse love for others. It would create completely different climate and produce pleasant weather. Ha! Simple things, but it takes so long to work them out and start living it.

Mike Brown, Australia

What contentious truth confronts our age? What audacious vision can we pursue?

In St Mary's, the 'University Church' in Oxford, we read panels of history going back to the 13th century when this building *was* the University. For over 700 years, we read, this Church has been 'a focus of debates about religion, politics and morality.' Not just debates but a clash of fiercely-held principles. Here Archbishops and reformers were tried and dragged out to be burned at the stake. And during the 1920s and 1930s, upstairs in the original University library, some 60-70 students, graduates and faculty met daily at lunchtime 'to share our morning guidance, train each other and to plan', as 91 year-old Robin Evans told us. So the Oxford Group was in that tradition of ferment.

Are we engaged in that struggle of ideas today? We focus on 'honest dialogue' and trustbuilding. But what contentious truth confronts our age? Should we help the emerging generation confront the spiritless and values-bankrupt materialism which fuels resource

wars, rich/poor injustices and climate disaster? 'Materialism is our great enemy,' Buchman believed. 'It is the chief ism we have to combat and conquer. It is the mother of all the isms... Without the conquest of materialism our nations will decay from within while we prepare to defend ourselves from attacks from without.'

In Freudenstadt, Germany, we walked the 'Frank Buchman Weg', the path in the Black Forest where, where the thought crystallized: 'The next great move in the world will be a movement of moral re-armament.' It was, to borrow a current phrase, 'an audacious hope', broadcast to the world from early 1938, 70 years ago, to a world on the verge of war.

The words are still there, written in German on a bronze plaque mounted on a stone by the path. As we sat around it, our hosts Folker and Monica Mittag described the 'tipping point' of the Berlin Airlift whose 60th anniversary was also celebrated this year. Requiring massive logistical resources, it was an 'audacious' attempt to confront the Russian blockade. And it swung history. Only months later, in October 1948, Buchman set off from Caux with a party of 260, 'the largest non-military operation since the war' – using the plays *The Good Road* and *The Forgotten Factor*, and 1.5 million copies of the booklet *Es Muss Alles Anders Werden* (*Everything must be different*). Again, it was an audacious strategy which, as the Mittags said, helped to bring an ideological swing in the Ruhr industrial heartland during those critical years. Fiona Daukes' husband, Geoffrey, was one of many who stayed in Germany then, serving that vision month after month.

As we sat by that stone, Niketu Iralu prayed in thanks to God, on behalf of all of us, for what has been given to us through the obedience and vision of Buchman. And those who worked with him. And we walked away, wondering what audacious vision we may be asked to serve today?

Fiona Daukes, United Kingdom

I need to be ready not to have the easy and comfortable life I so often crave.

Being part of the Traveling Group, and the oldest participant was a challenge, but something I am really glad I did. One highlight for me was looking at the Keswick fells, thinking of Fiona Leggat and feeling strongly that even if it took a long time, there would be growth.

As we proceeded on the journey it seemed to be happening. In the St. Nicolai ruined church at Visby I was conscious of the vast numbers of people who had gone on, and left us such a precious heritage. A filthy rag was blowing in the freezing wind on a rod across a window aperture, and I remembered Frank Buchman's remark that he wanted to be an old shirt on the line, to let God's spirit blow through. The whole gathering knelt on the stony ground to surrender ourselves, (again), to God's will, and I knew I needed to be ready not to have the easy and comfortable life I so often crave.

I greatly appreciated getting to know the younger ones, and to have songs and honest up-to-date personal experiences wherever we went added enormously to the different events. This also meant that the 'I too was wrong' moment became real to those we met on the way.

Christina DeAngelis

"Purity is possible. It is also essential." - Frank Buchman -

This was the challenge Frank Buchman gave to the students he met in Oxford in the 1920s. "Purity is essential" means that if I want to be able to hear the still small voice of guidance inside, if I want to be part of the solutions rather than the problems of our time, then I need to clean up my own inner world. "Put your receiving set in order because sin blocks power," Buchman used to say. That is the challenge.

On this journey from Keswick to Caux I heard the challenge to address those issues in my own life that are blocking my power and my ability to listen. In Keswick it was realizing as Buchman had done that "I too was wrong" for nursing ill-will against my parents, especially my father. In Oxford, it meant waking up to what purity means in my relationships with men - "being whole-hearted, without any hidden agendas". In Visby, it was the challenge to look past my own needs and beyond what I want. If I only ever stay focused on my needs I remain either a beggar before others or a tyrant trying to punish them, overtly or passively, for not giving me what I want. But the good news is that purity is possible. In Freudenstadt and Caux the challenge became tentative steps to let God embrace the "big I" in my life so that I can be free to serve and care for others.

On my own it is not possible, but by remaining in daily contact with God, the source of my inspiration and power, then purity becomes possible and frees me to be all I am and can be.

Diana Damsa, Romania

"Put movement into people; not people into a movement."

This trip for me represents the connection with the past, which gives me a sense of continuity for the present and future work with IofC. Now that I have seen some of the landmarks of MRA/IofC history, and heard some of the stories directly from those who have lived them or met the people concerned, I get a feeling of ownership and responsibility for this work. During the trip one thing came through again and again, in different ways, through different stories and people - the concern that Frank Buchman had for individuals rather than programmes and plans. Frank Buchman's ideal of "putting movement into people and not people into a movement" resonates with me as I search for understanding in how to do this. Searching for the right inspiration and the genuine care for others is what I take from this experience.

Jean Brown, Australia/UK

Revisiting roots and realizing relevance

The Keswick to Caux journey was at least 3 years in the making. I made the suggestion tentatively at first, meeting reservation and encouragement in equal doses. My fellow Elders responded and the idea was advertised as an opportunity for the worldwide team of IofC to

revisit our roots and relevance.

The 'nursing of ill will', as Buchman described the truth about his preoccupation, was what had grabbed me first, that and the fact of the 100th anniversary of his spiritual encounter and release. Anniversaries are useful for focusing things. I have been aware of how much of our energy and creativity is blocked because of nursed ill will, nursed fear, nursed offence. I have been party to that myself. Nursing is an interesting way to describe it. Like a baby, holding it close, feeding it and protecting it. In the past weeks we have been made aware of various people addressing old grievances, making apologies and so on.

Significant for me has been the release from embarrassment about Buchman, from fears of appearing cultish if one spoke favourably of him, from fear of suspicions of hidden agendas should the Christian roots of our movement be too exposed. On this journey, past and present have come together into a new cohesion. And then the overwhelming reminder re the task to remake the world; faced with the amazing development of the Oxford Group, the historic impact of Moral Re-Armament, the global vision of Buchman and the God inspired transformation of people and places; of the very ordinary and fragile specimens of humanity on which it was, and will always be built.

On behalf of all the travellers may I express our deep appreciation for the amazing financial support in big and small gifts which made it possible for us to undertake this venture.

- For all those who made our travel and accommodation arrangements, often with great trouble.
- For those who joined us in the various places to share in this exploration of history and of spirit; teachers, guides and companions on the journey.

Thank you, to all.