

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

Monday, 26th July 1993

Dear friends,

The half-way mark in letters. And there's so much to say that it's very hard to know where to start. This letter will be more personal than usual. Those of us preparing and carrying this session have had a feeling of living at the edge, being vulnerable - but there's always been a friend hanging on when we went out of balance and could have fallen! Yet this is the place to live, at the frontier of known territory, taking risks, exploring new paths. There has been deep sharing, in the communities, but also in the main afternoon sessions, much emotion and feelings, some tears, as well as expressions of joy and liberation. I would like to learn not to apologise for my own emotions; I tend to start, 'I'm sorry, I'm rather emotional...' But why be sorry? This vulnerability has been part of the power, and part too of the learning and sharing together. Those who gave, who shared, gave of themselves rather than of their experience. We have been finding old truths, fresh-minted, shining and new. There is so much to be grateful for. We can only say that we've felt God's Spirit has been blowing powerfully. The fresh, habit-breaking ways, new forms, have not come from any reaction, but rather from God's creativity. Indeed, the Spirit of God cannot be organized. But we have felt His presence so strongly, and it has been a precious gift.

Now we move into the last two and half days, on Courage and Decision, after yesterday's evaluation of 'Where are we now?'. We were asked to stand to recognize the memberships of new communities formed during these days: 'All those who have made a friend from another country,' 'All those who have made a friend from another generation,' and almost all stand. 'All those who have done something they've never done before,... who have walked somewhere they didn't know': the Saturday was an outing and picnic, with groups of all sizes and ages criss-crossing the paths between here and the Rochers de Naye and the Dent de Jaman. (And we were blessed with the finest day of the session, neatly framed in rain on either side.) 'All those who are dealing with something new in their lives,' and after a moment of hesitation, quite a number of us stand up, and I am moved to see one of the pioneers of Caux, in their 80's, beside me.

The chairs in the hall have almost completed a circle, and us with them. This morning, we will find the chairs facing the last, front right pillar, looking out towards the bay window and the mountains, and the world that awaits us when we leave here. Hanging from the last, Courage/Decision, graffiti board is a card and paper model of a para-glider, those multi-coloured nylon creations that carry bird-men over our heads from the top of the Rochers down to the lake-side. (The graffiti boards are now full of comments, prayers, poems, aphorisms, jokes, even a giant trio of paper butterflies made out of place mats.) One of the communities out for a picnic yesterday watched people leaping into space: this was a suitable symbol for our last theme.

A few days before, I was out running, pushing hard, trying to break a personal record. There are moments when the body and mind seem in perfect harmony, all the machine is working well, and you are almost flying. And then you lose it, there is pain, and loss of pace and grace. That was when I saw one of these para-gliders soaring low over my head, a picture of effortless elan, and a picture of the kind of change most of us long for, far removed from just trying harder. A change of state, a leap into a new medium, in the same way that clouds become rain, or as ice melts to become water.

A mark of these days has been the full attendance at the afternoon meetings - even on the few nicer days - and the number attending the morning times of sharing in communities, after quiet reflection on two questions posed on slips colour-coded for the theme of the day. We have stressed a rule of confidentiality - that what is said in the communities stays there, unless express permission is asked for and given. So much, most, of the wealth of these days is there, shared between small groups of new friends. And we have been learning, or re-learning, the power of shared needs and searching, of shared life rather than just shared experience or history. For many, a highlight was the evening of prayer in the round, in the great hall, with the younger ones sitting on the floor, and a flow of silence, music, prayers from many faiths, starting with one in Hebrew from a Jew. A Hindu prayed, and I, a stubborn rather narrow Protestant, suddenly felt that God was giving me a heart-melting gratitude for our Hindu brothers and sisters, and for this amazing variety of faith and search for Him.

A meal in silence, supper, was a strange experience for many, the large dining room filled with just a quiet clink of cutlery. For some it was a positive experience, a fresh way of being with others, and even becoming friends, for others it was no joy at all. Several have suggested a quiet dining room in future, for those who would like this more restful mealtime. One of those who didn't enjoy the quiet meal even suggested a quiet room where we could send those we do not want to hear from! The silent meal was followed by an evening programme of slides of the Finnish artist Segerströle's paintings, and music by Sibelius.

Indeed silence has often greeted speakers in the meetings, rather than applause: you can't clap costly sharing, the Belgian father who tells of welcoming the parents of his daughter's murderer. This is not the theory of forgiveness. An East European trade unionist said in rather broken English, 'Caux is holidaying my heart.' 'I came with low expectations,' said someone who has been here many times before, 'but I've never been so happy. I've had such low expectations of God and His love.' A younger person added, 'I've never felt the Holy Spirit so strongly at work.'

I look forward to holidaying my spirit outside Caux for a day and half in the up-coming break between sessions, before the start of 'Regions in crisis, regions in recovery' which will be the high point of the summer, in term of numbers. The advance house-count is soaring over the 550 mark, and the word is going out that Caux is full!

Grateful greetings,

Andrew Stallybrass