

REARMEMENT MORAL · CAUX

Centre de Rencontres Internationales

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TÉLÉGRAMME CAUXVAUD

MOUNTAIN HOUSE
RUE DU PANORAMA
CH-1824 CAUX

Monday, 2nd August 1993

Dear friends,

The pale light of a full moon has given way to the growing light of dawn. A fine day is on the way, heralding this afternoon's start of the new session, 'Regions in crisis, regions in recovery - learning from one another'. The house is filling fast, and by tomorrow night, just about every bed will be occupied. A few hours away from Caux, and an army of fresh faces greet you on your return, old friends and new. Now that I no longer work in the accommodation team, life is full of pleasant surprises; then I always knew ahead of time who was expected, with whom and when.

It is hard, strangely hard, to cast the mind back to the end of the previous 'intimate-global' session. It was such a profoundly rich time, and yet for me it seems almost light years away. The day after the session closed, three of us headed for the mountains, and after a night in a cabin dormitory, in perfect weather, climbed the Dents du Midi. Climbing up over 2,200 metres, it is strange to discover how restful to the mind it is to push the body to its limits! I didn't think of Caux or conferences once. Then we have again celebrated Switzerland's national day - for the first time, the Swiss have decided to make it a whole day holiday, but it fell on a Sunday. As usual, some of our neighbours from Glion celebrated by getting up early and serenading the surroundings with their brass band. Last night, fires large and small twinkled up and down the lake-side. We could admire perhaps a dozen different firework displays, including a very modest one at the summit where we'd been two days before.

There is a nice word in French which finds no direct equivalent in English: 'comblé'. It means 'full, or filled', and for me it has echoes of the Biblical phrase about a cup filled to overflowing, heaped up. That describes our feelings about the last session, those of us who dreamed it. The last two full days dealt with fear, the fears that hold us back from decision, and the courage to take a new step. In the afternoons, we saw a new presentation of William Wilberforce's battle against slavery and to change Britain's moral climate, told in slides by Bill Cameron-Johnson, and alongside it, a vivid report on the Richmond conference, and the 'Healing the heart of America' initiative; Pierre Spoerri gave a presentation, with a film clip, about the South Tyrol story.

They were vivid illustrations of the phrase 'the decision of an instant to set a new course and the faithfulness of a lifetime to complete a journey' from the welcoming document on the session that people had received as they arrived.

The final evening, Tuesday, saw us all in the theatre for what was billed as a celebration, starting with a variety of musical and comedy items from participants, and ending with 'The Dictator's Daughter'. The different musical sketches that had been produced to illustrate the four themes were slotted together into a full production of great freshness, creativity and promise, by a small army of enthusiastic younger people.

The hall was rather smoky as people came in for the closing ceremony on the Wednesday morning, as a fire was burning cheerfully in the fire place, and the graffiti flats were turned into one column, a symbolic tree. The two clown characters who had led the morning 'open forum' meetings, Int and Glob, appeared with Glint, a young Asian girl 'brought by the stork' and representing the best of both of them, and the future. As some sang the spiritual 'I'm gonna lay down my burden... fears, hurts... down by the fire side', a flood of people came up to burn in the fire the papers on which they had written the things they wanted to leave behind for ever, and to pin up on the tree the fruits they wanted to take away with them, and their reasons for gratitude.

Those who wanted to could say a word. A Croatian spoke of the many destroyed homes where he came from, and his gratitude for this home of Caux. 'Many of us have found light here. Thank you for teaching me to listen and to be obedient,' he said. One lady came up and emptied a waste paper basket of 'burdens' into the fire, before explaining that she was doing it on behalf of her entire community! Another spoke of 'the pain of surrendering my will to God, and the joy of finding a new love in Jesus, and a new depth in silence and prayer'. 'The community in Caux is a miracle for us,' said a young Czech. A young person talked of 'a sense that the common ground that unites us is so much more important than what divides us'. A professional interpreter came down from her cabin to say that she'd stayed longer than planned in Caux, because she'd found it so interesting, and she felt that she was putting away her scepticism. She spent most of her life translating others' thoughts. It was quite a new experience to speak her own! One of the organizers spoke of 'daring to be empty and trusting to be filled'.

Then we formed a wide arc, holding the rope braided together of all our individual pieces, red, blue, green and yellow, and sang and prayed, before untying all the knots together, and taking with us a piece of the rope as a symbol and reminder of this time.

'Comblé' from Caux,

Andrew Stallybrass