

"LIEN" NETWORK

Rationale and facts behind the initiative

1. WHY AN EUROPEAN NETWORK

- * With the shaping of a new Europe and the enlargement of the integrative idea, most groups, movements and institutions acquire a transnational character. The Grail cannot be an exception, remaining a nationally-bound antique.
- * The age gap between the predominant generations in the existing national Grail groupings in Europe and the young European women corresponds also to a gap in mentality. Many young women in Europe are well aware that they will function in interaction with European people of other countries. Therefore the need to establish close links during their youth with other young European women is very clear for them.
- * It is obvious that most women who participate in "Lien" are not geared to participation in the Grail. But reaching out in this way and establishing a continuity of contacts with those women does provide a "proximity" with the Grail of which we have to be aware. (The interest among the Swedish participants is a good case in point.)

2. BACKGROUND FOR THE "LIEN" NETWORK

- * The "Lien" network was preceded by two experiences:
 - one was during the 80's the idea of using my lectures at different Universities outside Portugal to reach out to new contacts; my attempt to be together with another Grail person during those lectures was unsuccessful.
 - the other was made during the Summer 87 when Isabel Allegro and I met in London with a few young women. They issued a Statement which I tried to spread out and on which basis I tried to organize a meeting. Somehow the initiative didn't "take off".
- * The "Lien" network started during 89 on the basis of several contacts I made during the Summer 88 in Taizé and of contacts among women of different nationalities I had met in Paris.
- * At the end of the 80's the form of a 4-page newsletter as a means of establishing networks and maintaining contacts became extremely wide-spread. Hence the idea of giving shape to the "Lien" network with the "Lien" newsletter. The newsletter was established with letters written informally by some of those women. English and French are the two languages used. No change is made on the texts sent as very few are writing in a foreign language. It is essential to keep the original "flavour" of each culture and person.



3. CURRENT "LIEN" COMPOSITION

- * In April 90 there were some 30 women participating in the network. I had in my mind the target 100 for the Summer 92.
- * At this stage (30th April 92) there are 79 women receiving the "Lien" newsletter. I don't think that by the Summer we will have reached the target mentioned above.
- * Not all the contacts have the same "life-expectancy"! Hence the following breakdown of the 79 figure:
 - 13 have collaborated in "Lien";
 - other 15 maintain some kind of correspondance with me;
 - 3 have contact with Isabel;
 - 4 have contact with Marijke;
 - so far 20 are passive recipients;
 - (7 have dropped out from the initial list).
- * There are participants in the "Lien" network in the following countries:
 - within the EEC: Spain/France/Germany/The Netherlands/Belgium/Luxembourg/Italy/UK/Ireland/Portugal
 - within the EFTA:Sweden/Norway/Switzerland/Austria
 - other countries:Finland/Lithuania/Poland/Tchecoslovaquia
- * As to the steadiness of those contacts the 17 countries break down as follows:
 - steady contacts: 5 countries
 - intermittent contacts: 4 countries
 - sparse contacts: 6 countries
 - recent contacts: 2 countries

4. PHILOSOPHY AND METHODOLOGY OF "LIEN" NETWORK

- * The network can develop according to the laws of *web-formation*:
 - links can only be kept and strenghtened when there are firm *radius*, that is, personal and frequent contact either with a Grail person or with a committed member of the network;
 - as written contact is not enough and Europe has become a continent of transnational gatherings, the *proximity strategy* is an indispensable complement; this means small meetings in geographical areas where the participants are rather near to each other;



- for the network to gain solidity the identification of the *human knots* is fundamental, that is, to discover those who have leadership qualities and can help weaving the contacts in their region;

- the identity of the network asks for moments when the greatest number possible meet face to face and when other persons present question the goals of the network; this means meetings at least during the Summer period serving both as occasions for *on-going process of mutual reinforcement* and as *step-stones for strategizing*.

2 * The network has a value in itself - it puts together young women who otherwise wouldn't be exposed to the kind of interaction the Grail can provide in all its endeavours.

* The "Lien" network emphasizes from the beginning the following elements:

- being a young woman today in Europe and the involvement in shaping the historical events by being committed as women;

- contributing to create a true European identity with the deepening of the diversity existing on the continent;

- sharing at the level of Faith not only through the direct approach to the religious question but also through different elements of self-knowledge (stimulated by the trans-cultural context of the network).

* The relationship of the "Lien" network with the Grail is the following:

3 - the newsletter "Lien" has the indication that it is published by "The Grail Publications Unit" in Lisbon;

- in every meeting it is clearly stated that the "Lien" network is an initiative of a few Grail women, with a concise explanation about the Grail;

- some participants want more details about the connection between the "Lien" network and the Grail - normally this is provided individually and according to the questions raised;

- whenever the point is raised it is stated that the Grail is open to women "of all walks of life"...

- some of the "Lien" participants in Sweden have started a small Grail grouping while keeping "Lien" as their project involving a wider circle.

