

inter religious peace colloquium

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Letter to Bellagio Participants from Joseph Gremillion

31 October 1975

Dear Rabbi Lamm,

Henry Siegman last wrote to us all on 30 July. I hope that you have been well during these past three months, and are hard at work on behalf of the hungry and poor and oppressed. On behalf of the Steering Committee and continuation group I share with you several proposals and decisions for followup to our Bellagio experience.

Henry Siegman - ~~Coordinator~~

1. The Interreligious Peace Colloquium will be our umbrella body of the five world Faiths - Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, Muslim, Christian. As a transnational movement we will focus on societal issues within the religious and ethical context, stressing interfaith dimensions among believers who are policy- and decision-makers; personal exchange, trust and friendship should become the hallmarks of this movement.

A. IRPC will perform the following general functions:

- a) Continue communication with Bellagio alumni, strengthening our "community of friends"; urging all to regional and national initiatives for broadening our circles and self-starting efforts.
- b) Advance relations with other interfaith bodies, such as the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), which has continental and national units in Asia, Europe, North America, Japan and India.
- c) Strengthen interfaith consciousness and programs within religious or "ecclesiastical" communities, e.g., World Council of Churches, Synagogue Council, Catholic and Orthodox Churches; comparable Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu bodies.
- d) Seek relations with religio-cultural bodies, e.g., the new Buddhist and Islamic associations.
- e) Contact and cooperate with secular bodies as becomes appropriate.

- B. IRPC proposes to hold a second colloquium in 1977 or 78 on "The Changing World Economic Order: Challenge to the Five World Faiths". This will build upon the experience and consensus derived from our first colloquium on the food/energy crisis. A book length report of this meeting will be published in 1976 by Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 10545.

C. IRPC will encourage formation of groups drawn from two, three or more Faith communities, at continental, regional, national or metropolitan levels. These will vary with population composition, cultural complexion and current issues proper to each area.

- a) Such groups could be formed, for example, by Hindus, Muslims and Christians in India; by Buddhists with other Faith communities in Sri Lanka, Indochina and Japan; by Muslims and Christians concerned with Lebanon and Cyprus, Indonesia and the Philippines.
- b) Formation of groups by Jews-Muslims-Christians will be especially encouraged in North America, West Europe and the Middle East, at local levels within each of these three regions and among persons who travel from one region to the others in their normal business, political, academic and other pursuits.

2. Succeeding Henry Siegman, I will serve as part-time coordinator for an experimental period of about a year. My address is given above.

3. Your comment, critique and counsel concerning these decisions and proposals are requested. Your thinking is particularly needed on:

- a) The relation of IRPC with your Faith community, and with other inter-religious efforts with which you are familiar.
- b) The proposed colloquium for 1977 or 78 on "The Changing World Economic Order: Challenge to the Five World Faiths".
- c) The possibility of forming groups in your area (local, national, regional) composed of members from two, three or more Faiths. Do such groups already exist? Do you participate? How relate with our program?
- d) Suggestions for IRPC.

Also, I hope you will inform me of your own activities within the field of our joint concerns. You who reside outside the United States will please inform me if you plan to visit this country. We can then try to get together; I will be in the New York-Washington area about once a month.

Finally, I wish to commend Henry Siegman for his work as the first coordinator of IRPC. It was his creative devotion and determination which got us together at Bellagio. I ask your prayers and cooperation as I follow in his footsteps.

Warmest best wishes,

*Your ideas on the Middle East program
would be especially appreciated -*

Joseph Gremillion
Joseph Gremillion
Coordinator

Interreligious Peace Colloquium - IRPC

Notes for Program on The Future of the Middle East

First Draft
November 1975

I. Scope

The Prospectus of the Interreligious Peace Colloquium states that, "IRPC proposes a long-range program on the future of the Middle East as a whole, under the three-fold dimension of: 1) its own advance and role as a region, and 2) with other regions within 'the changing world economic order.'" (Second draft, October 1975: page 4, parag. 1A, b1)

This interreligious program of Jews-Muslims-Christians aims at offering moral and psychological communication, openness and nourishment, at matrix and catalyst, for begetting the fresh economic, political and cultural accords and structures required for peace and advance among the nations of the Middle East. In our interdependent world these goals cannot be attained by the peoples of the Middle East alone. They must gear in with the purposes of other regions.

The interregional scope of this program will focus primarily upon Middle East relations with Western Europe and North America. These three regions are most directly affected by the Jewish, Muslim and Christian faiths and their cultural heritage. Arab nations and Israel already have, or now enter into, special relations with the industrialized West - of cooperation or of conflict - in the economic, political and military spheres. Relations of the Middle East, alone or in conjunction with the West, with other regions will be considered within the larger context of the changing world economic order.

Our program is therefore projected in three interrelated parts:

The Future of the Middle East -

1. Regional Justice, Development and Peace
2. Cooperation with the West
3. In the Changing World Economic Order

II. Some Elements

This program seeks to interconnect the external reality of economic-political-military facts with the interior reality of the human-and-social psyche: motive, ideal, value, historical-cultural memory - particularly as these derive from faith communities, be they living, evolving or dying. Our contention is that a realpolitik based solely on external reality is unreal. Because man fashions his society to fulfill interior visions and aspirations; so does the awakened human community.

And in the Middle East the stark reality is human communities acquiring national and psychological self-identity, strongly nourished by religious roots. Consequently our program must explore the origin and sustenance of Zionism through the Hebrew Faith, and of Arab Nationalism from Islam. Simultaneously the secularizing movement presses forward: within Israel, against its theocratic elements; among Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular, who want a democratic, secular, pluralist state.

(Elements of this religio-ideological context are given in two articles in Foreign Affairs, October 1975: "The Psychology of Middle East Peace", by Nahum Goldmann; and "Doomed to Peace", by Bechir Ben Yahmed, pages 113-133. The latter is editor of Jeune Afrique, Paris. Goldmann is President of the World Jewish Congress since 1951, and former President of the World Zionist Organization; he also chairs the Jewish committee for material claims against Germany.)

Western Christian contributions to the conflict, over the centuries and in recent years, must also be pursued: discrimination, ghettos, pogroms, Holocaust; crusades, colonialism, imperialism.

While past roots remain important, it is the possibility of future openness, communication and cooperation which must animate our three faith communities. A few questions:

1. Sharing so much in common, Jew-Muslim-Christian, to what degree need we stand by the exclusivist claims of our special revelations, especially concerning nation and society? Is religious pluralism possible? advisable?
2. How make a joint response to the secularizing movements? positive and/or negative?
3. How strengthen together the human values deriving from and common to all three faiths? and the social ethics?
4. What common ground can we find on social justice and development; human rights and democratic participation; economic and political structures among nations and regions; for internal, regional and world peace?
5. How develop programs and networks for these purposes in the real-politik of the Middle East, and for its relations as a region to West Europe and North America?
6. Will the petroleum resources of the Arab and Muslim world combine with Western industrial might into a new power bloc confronting the rest of the human family, particularly the Fourth World? with what consequences for the international justice, development and peace - and for the world faiths?
7. Can Jews-Muslims-Christians come together as People of the Book, Children of the One Merciful Creator God, and combine with Hindu, Buddhist and other faith communities on behalf of the hungry, poor and oppressed of every faith or of none?

III. Process and Calendar

It is proposed that a work group be set up to elaborate a program. It must include persons from the three regions and the three faiths. It should project two consultations: on Regional Justice, Development and Peace, during Autumn 1976; on Cooperation with the West, for Spring 1977. (A five faith colloquium on The Changing World Economic Order will be planned by a different group for 1977-78.)

Criticism, comment and advice are requested. Concrete suggestions for program and for composing the work group are urgently needed.

Joseph Gremillion
Coordinator

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