

“...since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that

THE DEFENSES OF PEACE

must be constructed...”

*—Preamble to the
Constitution of UNESCO*

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS PROGRAMS OF THE
AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

Since the close of World War II, the work of the American Friends Service Committee has turned increasingly toward the prevention of further conflict through the promotion of international understanding. In many lands and in many ways, the AFSC has sought to bring together men of differing, sometimes opposing, views in the hope that personal relationships can reach across ideological barriers, helping to create the conditions for peace.

The search for creative encounters permeates the entire program of the Committee. International relief and service projects are organized where possible on both sides of conflict situations. Youth programs are located in tension areas. Community relations projects address themselves specifically to conflict resolution. Workers in peace education bring their dialogue to the public forum. For all programs, participants are recruited from the widest possible background of nations, races, and religions.

Certain programs, in addition, address themselves specifically to improving international understanding. The School Affiliation Service arranges partnerships between schools in the United States and nine countries abroad, aimed at involving students, faculty, and community members in a cultural exchange. Summer Projects Abroad sponsors a series of international work camps, which bring young people of many nations together for a summer of community service by day and campfire discussions by night.

A tripartite work camp, among young people of the U.S.S.R., the United States, and England, has been a recent, successful experiment. Increasingly, the Committee's program of peace education has international emphasis as staff members participate in world-wide peace conferences and maintain close contact with persons interested in nonviolence, whether in India, Africa, or Alabama.

The efforts of the Service Committee to respond to the intellectual demand for the defenses of peace have led in recent years to the development of four programs especially concentrated on this objective and organized in the International Affairs Division. Each of these interrelated programs strives to stir in the minds of men that spirit which will press the quest for nonviolent ways whereby individuals may live together and still know the full flowering of their individuality.



Diplomats at an AFSC Conference at Clarens, Switzerland, in earnest discussion.

SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES

In Lahore, West Pakistan, a group of young leaders from Ceylon, Thailand, Nepal, and Pakistan spend eight days together in quiet talks about the development of democracy in Asia. In Hiroshima, Japan, students from many nations gather in the shadow of the bomb to ask themselves, "Is coexistence possible?" At Clarens, Switzerland, diplomats come together for ten days of informal talks about international responsibility. In Accra, Ghana, government officials and other leaders from eight African nations meet to discuss the relevance of a seminar program for the future of Africa.

These and other fruitful encounters among graduate students, young professional people, and mature diplomats are arranged each year by the AFSC's International Conferences and Seminars program. Begun in the United States in 1947, the program has expanded into Europe, South and East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Africa. Altogether, it is estimated some 5,800 persons have participated in seminars and 950 in conferences for diplomats. A great many former seminars participants are now in positions of responsibility in government or foreign service, while many former conference participants have risen to ministerial or ambassadorial rank.

Though differing in content, and in the age and the experience of participants, the seminars and conferences have many points in common. They are residential, lasting from a few days to three weeks. They are informal, with participants coming as individuals, not as representatives of governments or organizations. They provide no ready-made answers nor indoctrination, but are dedicated to a quiet search for truth.

As this program continues from year to year, ramifications develop. Alumni meet in many centers of the world to continue the stimulating dialogue. New experiments are tried: a peace research conference, reciprocal East-West seminars, conferences for parliamentarians,

conferences on the minister-counsellor level. Increasingly, emphasis is being placed on bridging barriers between East and West, between the established and the newly emerging nations.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS SEMINARS OF WASHINGTON

A similar program with a somewhat different emphasis is the International Affairs Seminars of Washington. The major focus of this program has been on preparing American leaders to do a better job in international relations. Since 1951 the Washington seminars have brought the resources of eminent social scientists and others of special competence to those who develop and carry out government policy.

For example, a social psychologist, who is also a Soviet expert, recently came to the seminars to discuss certain psychological mechanisms and their possible effect on United States-Soviet relations. Following the usual pattern of the monthly seminars, he met on two evenings with groups of about 20 each, drawn from a long list of government executive officers and congressmen. He also served as resource person for an off-the-record luncheon with the press, and attended another luncheon for government personnel directors.

In addition to this pattern, extra meetings for special groups are arranged on frequent occasions. Educators are frequently drawn into the seminar program, and persons attached to the various embassies occasionally attend. The subject matter is generally international, and the discussion frank, lively, and off-the-record.

Among leading social scientists and experts on international affairs who have served as consultants are Erich Fromm, Philip Noel-Baker, Margaret Mead, Gordon Allport, Ralph J. Bunche, Arthur Larson, and Arnold Toynbee.

THE QUAKER PROGRAM AT THE UNITED NATIONS

The same principle—that of preparing the defenses of peace by promoting human relationships between diplomats and others in authority—motivates another, related AFSC program. At the United Nations headquarters in New York and in Geneva, Switzerland, two small Quaker teams keep in close contact with UN delegates and permanent UN staff members. Diplomats and others in key positions are frequently invited to small, informal gatherings at Quaker House in New York or in Geneva for off-the-record conversations. Here, in a warm relaxed atmosphere, representatives of governments are encouraged to lay aside official positions and come to know each other as human beings.

Both the Friends World Committee for Consultation and the American Friends Service Committee are, on different levels, officially accredited nongovernmental organizations at UN headquarters. During the General Assembly each year, the Quaker program staff in New York is augmented by a small international group of Friends. The staff attend UN meetings and consult with delegates on such problems as disarmament, care of refugees, and respect for human rights. They seek to encourage in representatives of all nations a willingness to settle international questions by peaceful means.

The Quaker program at the UN is a two-way street, providing Friends with a channel of communication through which they may express their concerns to that august body and through which they may learn more about its work and deliberations. Assistance is given by the QUNP staff to seminars coming to visit the UN, and reports are prepared for Friends and others. One staff member devotes full time to informing the American public of developments at the United Nations.

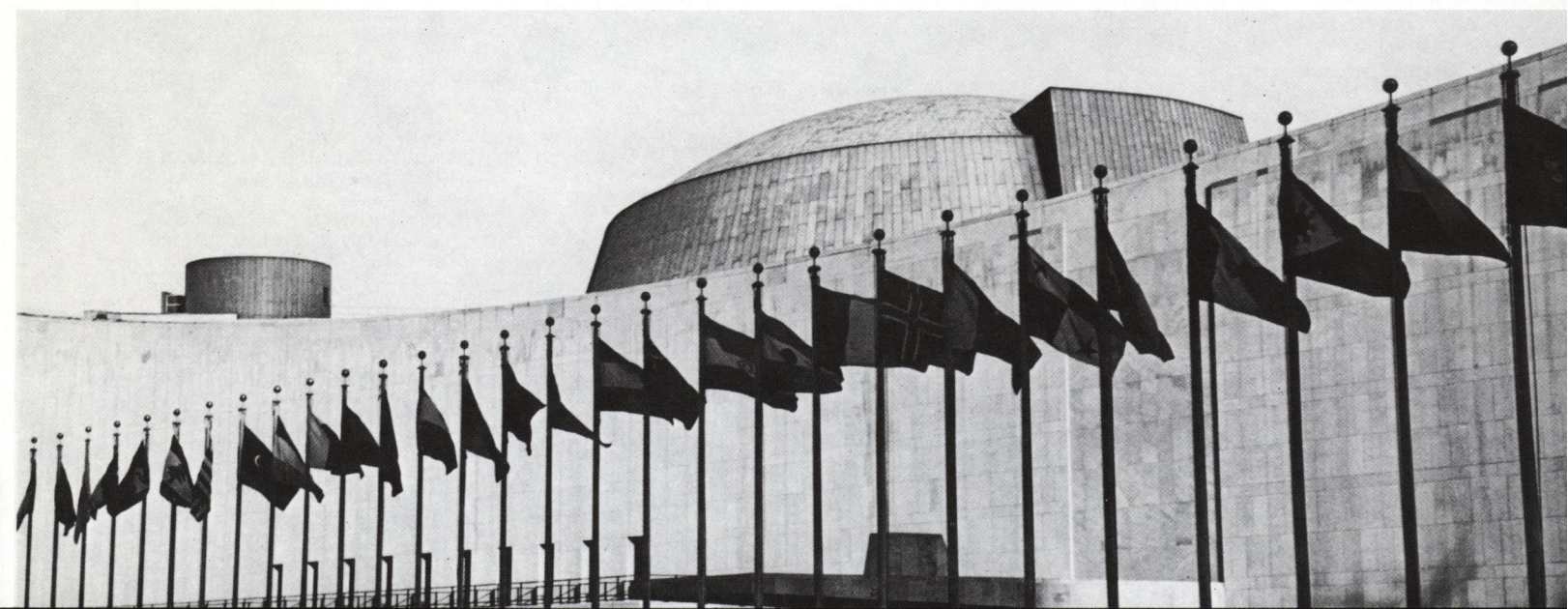
In Geneva, two special ten-day seminars are conducted to acquaint both young people and adults with the work of the UN specialized agencies. Geneva is also the headquarters for many world-wide voluntary agencies, with whom the AFSC staff cooperates on many projects, and to whom staff members interpret Quaker points of view.

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES AND CENTERS

Finally, in each of several world capitals, the AFSC maintains a representative who in his own person seeks to serve as a bridge between alienated peoples. In divided Berlin, a Quaker International Affairs Representative, or QIAR, has sought to surmount barriers by developing relationships with Friends, government officials, university and church leaders on both sides of the wall. In Tokyo, another such representative has looked for ways to create contact between Mainland Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans. In such cities as Delhi and Geneva, other QIARS have played reconciling roles. In addition, the QIAR may be sent to certain trouble spots, bringing information from these situations directly to the AFSC.

In times past the AFSC has maintained Quaker Centers in many lands. Besides being a quiet place where men and women of many different races, religions, and national origins could meet on common ground, the centers have served to house international visitors, to provide temporary shelter for refugees, to accommodate student seminars, and to provide the community with social, educational, and religious programs. In recent years, with somewhat more stable conditions, the emphasis of the AFSC has shifted from the operation of centers to the maintenance of QIARS. However, wherever the need remains, several centers continue to operate, administered in cooperation with local committees or the British Friends Service Council.

In Washington, D. C., a Quaker center has played an important role in the life of the nation's capital since 1947. Each year approximately 7,000 invited visitors come to Davis House from more than 80 countries. Besides a bed, breakfast, and afternoon tea, all at a modest cost, these international visitors are given a chance to meet other newcomers in a relaxed atmosphere. Davis House serves, also, as a center for many luncheons, teas, dinners, and seminar meetings. The directors maintain a close relationship with the staff of the embassies in Washington and serve as AFSC liaison with international educational organizations.



COMMON GROUND In a sense it is wrong to attempt to describe these four programs in isolation. Each has a direct bearing upon the other; each springs from a common philosophical core. Graduates of diplomats' conferences serve as resource persons for international seminars. QIARS recruit participants for conferences. Quaker representatives at the United Nations work with diplomats who have had previous AFSC experience. Staff members of all four programs approach diplomats and other government officials, when it is necessary to do so, to arrange for service, youth, or peace projects abroad.

All four are alike, also, in presenting certain difficulties of evaluation. How do you measure good will? In the number of persons the program touches? In the roster of past participants who arise to positions of significance? In the vitality of alumni groups? In statistics on meetings attended, cups of tea drunk, articles written?



The answers lie rather in heartwarming incidents: "I shall never be the same again," writes one participant in a seminar. "This has opened up a door almost too wide to go through." "For diplomats the reassertion of the reality of the creative world of the spirit is a refreshing experience," says a visitor to Quaker House in New York.

When men confront each other in the modern world they tend to buckle on the armor of ideology. Communication is lost in the clash of worn clichés. Quakers believe that communication can occur on many levels: the intellectual, the emotional, the spiritual. Often persons estranged by political positions can come together in recognition of their common humanity. All over the world, the AFSC tries to provide opportunities for such encounters, believing that creative interpersonal relationships, based on mutual respect, are the only sure defenses of peace.

AFSC INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OFFICES:

NEW YORK, New York 10017
345 East 46th Street

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20009
1822 R Street, N.W.

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20008
2101 R Street, N.W.

GENEVA, Switzerland
12 rue Adrien-Lachenal

LOME, Togo, West Africa
Boite Postale 971

TOKYO, Japan
95, 1-chome, Shimo Osaki
Shingagawa-ku

DELHI 6, India
27 Rajpur Road



The American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization founded in 1917, is supported and staffed by persons of many faiths. In addition to its work in international affairs, it conducts programs in Algeria, Jordan, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Northern Rhodesia, Hong Kong, and Austria, as well as the United States.

All programs of the Service Committee are an expression of Quaker concern for the relief of suffering and for reconciliation, and are witness to Quaker belief that through God mankind can find answers to the perplexing problems that face us.

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

National office:

160 North 15th Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

Regional offices:

CAMBRIDGE, Massachusetts 02138
44-A Brattle Street (P.O. Box 247)

CHICAGO, Illinois 60605
431 South Dearborn Street

DAYTON, Ohio 45406
915 Salem Avenue

DES MOINES, Iowa 50312
4211 Grand Avenue

HIGH POINT, North Carolina 27261
1818 So. Main St. (P.O. Box 1307)

HOUSTON, Texas 77004
4717 Crawford Street

NEW YORK, New York 10011
Suite 220, 2 West 20th Street

PASADENA, California 91103
980 North Fair Oaks

(P.O. Box 991—code 91102)
PHILADELPHIA, Penna. 19102

1500 Race Street
SAN FRANCISCO, California 94121

2160 Lake Street
SEATTLE, Washington 98105

814 N.E. 40th Street

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