Stephen Collett : Quaker Conferences for Diplomats

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Quaker Conferences for Diplomats

A 20TH CENTURY HISTORY

By Stephen Collett

[ca2000-2010]

Quaker United Nations Office

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Introduction

With the opening of the 21st century, and facing an alarming array of new as well as old challenges for our globe, it is useful to look back over an important chapter of the Religious Society of Friends work with diplomats and related international political activity in the 20th century. This short history reviews the germination and development of the model for Quaker conferences for diplomats and some of the ways it has contributed in the international sphere.

The idea of off-the-record meetings for decision-makers developed out of Friends' concern for identifying practical approaches to peace, informed by their tenets on giving an equal voice to all, on searching for the larger common truth, and on addressing the individual behind the title. With their conference model Friends opened new avenues for building understanding among government representatives in the crucial second half of the century and helped to bring a consensual approach to bear on many critical issues of international diplomacy and negotiation.

The story has three overlapping periods. The first began after the First World War, when Friends had been drawn into putting their ideals and their lives on the line as pacifists in war relief work and were moved in the aftermath to establish a more permanent presence for peace. This took the form of "Quaker embassies," later called Friends Centers, which were started up in the major cities of Europe and gradually around the world beginning in the 1920s. The Centers were charged to provide a "Quaker presence" and a continuous forum for dialogue within local civic and diplomatic communities on outstanding issues of peace and war. The second phase began after the Second World War, expressly as a program of conferences for diplomats, with roots in the inter-war period and Friends' experience interacting with the failed League of Nations. Officially called the Conferences and Seminars for Diplomats Program, in various locations and formats it ran for a quarter of a century beginning in the early 1950s. In the third phase, from the 1970s and continuing today, the Quaker United Nations Offices (QUNOs) in Geneva and New York, and Quaker International Affairs Representatives (QIARs) in regions around the world continue to use the Quaker conference model with diplomats and other decision makers.

The use of the conference model has evolved due to gradual changes in the functions of diplomacy and the issues being negotiated, to the speeding up of time, and to an evolution of priorities in the Friends' service agencies. With this dialogue model, bringing potential adversaries to see each other as potential partners, Friends' off-the-record meetings continue to contribute to policy debates at the United Nations, and to forums on local, national and regional politics around the world.

From the beginning and up through current initiatives, staffing and resources for this work have been a collaborative effort of Friends yearly meetings and service agencies. In the field of international relationships, where there are many other players, the Quaker contribution is a singular one, based profoundly in the perception of the "Light" in each person and of the possibilities of peaceful engagement among adversaries.

The League of Nations and Quaker Embassies/Friends Centers: 1920-1949

At the turn from the 19th to the 20th centuries, many Friends were participating in the great flowering of civil movements of the day, promoting peace, human rights and universal suffrage. They were active in -and in many cases helped to organize- the grand international conferences and the national movements that put these issues on the political agendas of the powerful nations of the world. But the Quaker individuals who joined this outpouring of conscience closing the 19th century were moved to action primarily as individuals rather than for the Religious Society of Friends. It took the First World War to draw Friends onto the international stage on a corporate scale.

Friends became deeply involved in humanitarian work in WWI, and through that work the first Quaker service organizations were formed, in the USA and Great Britain/Ireland, to be followed by others in Australia, Canada and elsewhere. Friends had provided ambulance services, assisted refugees, worked with prisoners of war (like getting German prisoners to help rebuild French villages) and fed the displaced. Friends came out of their war experiences with a sharpened sense of the politics of peace and of their own corporate potential. On both sides of the Atlantic, the service arms of American and British/Irish Friends, created to take up Friends' ministry in war, set about to extend their services into peacetime fields. Friends continued programs for mass feeding after the war (Herbert Hoover, administrator of the American Relief Administration turned over feeding in Germany to Quakers until 1922), and expanded food programs into other war-torn parts of central and eastern Europe. In the new Soviet Union, Friends organized relief from famines resulting from poor harvests between 1921 to 1926, again with predominantly non-Quaker funding and Hoover's support. Friends Ambulance Unit, in which some 1,400 persons -many non-Friends- had served during WWI, provided a pool of experienced staff for these efforts. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) began attending to national issues of poverty and justice, assisting families of striking textile workers in North Carolina, and providing relief, rehabilitation and political support for coal miners and migrant workers.

Yearly meetings across America and in Britain and Ireland were also seized by the promise of the League of Nations, and submitted statements on their views to the proceedings of the League's preparatory body of governments. Formulation of these interventions was vigorously debated and, without the yearly meetings coming to a united position, several submissions were made, generally strongly encouraging formation of the League while opposing its paragraphs on the use of deadly force to maintain world order.

As the League started its work -unfortunately without USA membership-, both Britain and Philadelphia YMs formed "League of Nations Watching Committees," to which yearly meetings further afield contributed their views. These committees previewed items on the League's agenda for Friends groups, and in turn advised their representatives at League headquarters in Geneva (after the Geneva Quaker Center was opened in 1922) on which questions Friends wanted lobbying to contribute a Quaker perspective. Issues of narcotics, armaments, sanctions, an international police force, conscription, stateless persons, conditions of minorities, and slavery were of continuous interest to Friends, as well as what London Yearly Meeting records describe in 1925 as the "most important" issue, the strengthening of the structure of the League itself.

Friends were interested, more widely, to have direct engagement in the way peace was perceived and discussed in Europe (still seen as the powder keg) and beyond, particularly in Asia. It was the British who launched the idea of "Quaker embassies" to be set up in major cities of Europe, though British Friends were soon joined and supported by yearly meetings in America (both USA and Canada) and by the American Friends Service Committee, which had been established as an independent Quaker agency during the war. Between 1920 and 1950 Friends International Centers operated in Frankfurt, Berlin, Nuremberg, Paris, Nice, Geneva, Vienna, Warsaw, Moscow, Copenhagen, Oslo, London, Amsterdam, Rome, Washington D.C., Salonika (Greece), Calcutta, Delhi, Shanghai, and Kingston (Jamaica).

A key aspect of the Friends International Centers' programs was to organize and host discussions bringing critical issues into focus for discriminating and influential groups. Participants were often chosen from diplomatic and national policy-making ranks, mixed to serve the Centers' primary purpose of reconciliation. London Yearly Meeting's proceedings from 1920 describe reports of "Gatherings for discussion ... in which vital questions are talked out in freedom." It proved an inventive and pragmatic model for peace work.

In Geneva, several of the Center's long-term projects included the convening of a regular forum for representatives of the nearly fifty international organizations with headquarters there, a function that in time became an official inter-agency body that continues to this day. Also, besides constant monitoring of the League of Nations for Friends, the office provided a press service (run by Bertram Pickard) for some forty newspapers in the US and Great Britain. Besides weekly lectures and informal discussions on the current issues for international service staff, in 1924-'25 the Center hosted a regular dialogue program including specialists and diplomats around negotiations on the Convention on Control of the International Trade in Arms, Munitions and Implements of War. Though this convention to control the arms trade failed, the negotiations did produce and adopt the important 1925 protocol against the use of poisonous gases in war. This protocol continues to provide an anchor for control of chemical weapons. The Geneva Friends Center received a special commendation from the League and was asked to continue its supportive work. (1.)

The Friends Centers also collaborated in providing an International Seminar Program for diplomats, exemplified by a series of conferences in the late 1920s for representatives from Germany and Poland, supported by the Berlin and Warsaw Centers.

From 1933, Quaker diplomatic and humanitarian efforts turned increasingly to succoring Jews and other victims of Nazi oppression. Traveling in 1935, Rufus Jones, clerk of AFSC's Board of Directors, reported back to London and Philadelphia that the Centers were "...like islands of light in a surrounding sea of darkness." The worst years of global economic depression and the Second World War severely curtailed activities of Friends International Centers, but they were revitalized and even expanded following 1946.

During and following World War II, Friends' service agencies unfolded a new chapter of humanitarian work, developing approaches for refugee and relief aid, and providing a model of commitment (underlined by Gunnar Jahn in his Nobel presentation speech), for which they were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 (2). But Friends had begun to work with the clay of international relations and in that medium they were to make a distinctive mark in the second half of the century.

Accomplishments of the Friends International Centers

In taking stock following World War II of what they had learned in their international endeavors since 1920, Friends saw that the network of International Centers in the major cities of Europe and in Asia had accomplished several things.

The Centers had attracted and nourished new groups of seekers, who in their turn had founded their own national branches of the Religious Society of Friends. Looking back in 1951, London Yearly Meeting proceedings note that "...in 1914 there were probably only three active meetings for worship on the continent: Stavanger, Copenhagen and Paris. By 1951 there are thirty to forty in Germany alone and several each in France, Switzerland, Holland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and individual meetings in Helsinki, Vienna and Rome."

And through the work of the Centers, Friends had made contacts widely across the national and international communities of policy makers. They had discovered that they had a certain handle, an approach that brought people together to discuss, off-the-record and in their personal capacities, important issues of the day. This approach worked both with neighbors from the community around the Centers (3.) and with diplomats and national policy makers.

In 1949, a meeting of representatives from the different Friends International Centers and their sponsoring bodies, the American Friends Service Committee and the Friends Service Council of Britain and Ireland Yearly Meetings, was held in Lisieux, France, to explore directions for continuing programs and the sharing of responsibilities. The experience of running International Centers over the past twenty-five years, which many Friends had worked in or visited or at least read about, had been important to Quakers across a wide band of traditions. Writing to London, Wilmington Yearly Meeting of Ohio declared that this work of Friends "...has given to its members a hilltop vision, enabling them to go back into their valleys of service with joyful hearts, and open, growing minds to labor for Him who said, 'if ye do it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'"

And now a number of those valleys were seen to be fertile. In Europe the focus of service was summed up as the three R's: relief, reconciliation, and rehabilitation. It was agreed among the Friends agencies meeting at Lisieux that Friends International Centers should give special place in their work to: a) peace and reconciliation - including East/West affairs, the United Nations, coordination of the European peace effort and race relations; b) human rights and the place of the individual in society, including conscientious objection to military service; and c) refugees, displaced, and distressed people. With continuing financial support from FSC London and AFSC, the Quaker Centers, other than Geneva and Paris, came increasingly under the responsibility of their own national groups. In 1950, London Yearly Meeting was spending £62,000 on the Centers and £86,000 on relief. The Yearly Meeting's proceedings from that year note: "Friends role and work with relief and refugees has ballooned...we have ambassadors at large in war zones everywhere." For example, at this time Friends along with the Red Cross had been given responsibility by the United Nations for Palestinian refugees displaced to Gaza in the formation of the State of Israel. This service for refugees was later taken over as the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). (4.)

The fledgling United Nations was of major interest to Friends as the League of Nations had been. In 1948, the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC, formed in 1937 to serve as a communication and coordination body for Friends worldwide) was among the first non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to be granted "consultative status" with the Economic and Social Council of the UN (an

accreditation given to over 2,700 non-governmental organizations at this writing). Official NGO status derives from article 71 of the UN Charter, referred to at that time as Eleanor Roosevelt's article for her leadership in formalizing a UN role for representatives of civil society.

Establishment of Quaker UN Offices and the Washington Seminars

From 1947, Quaker representatives to the United Nations were posted on behalf of FWCC both in Geneva, where the UN was taking over the Palais des Nations built for the League of Nations, and in New York, awaiting its new headquarters on the East River. The Geneva Quaker UN Office began as an extension of the Friends International Centre, under joint sponsorship by AFSC and FSC. In New York, under AFSC sponsorship, representatives Philip and Lois Jessup began a Friends Center in an apartment on East 52nd Street on loan to AFSC (they left in 1949 when Philip was appointed ambassador-at-large by president Truman; he finished his career as a justice at the International Court). They saw, in the words of Colin Bell, serving as one of the first Quaker UN representatives in Geneva, "... nations quietly getting down to the solid work of finding long-term constructive remedies for the world's ills...." And in New York and Geneva the QUNO staffs got down to the quiet work of following and contributing to the multilateral debate in the UN, using off-the-record parallel discussions in their residential facilities near the UN headquarters to put key people together on key questions. Among priority issues for Quaker UN representatives in the early years was the consolidation and strengthening of the UN system itself –this has remained a perennial concern. For example, Friends contributed from several angles in the establishment of both the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): Quaker relief and rehabilitation work was taken as a model in the start up of both and the new Quaker Office supported discussions within the UN leading to the creation of these agencies; additionally, a number of Friends with Quaker service backgrounds took high-level staff positions in these agencies and elsewhere in the UN system.

The QUNOs built their programs on a range of critical issues in human rights, development, disarmament, humanitarian relief, the environment, and peacemaking in specific conflicts where Friends had a window of insight. The objectives for this work were to help bring important issues to the fore for international consideration and debate, and to give support to the process of consensus-building for action. Their approach of attentive, open questioning, helping delegates to look for mutually useful ways forward, has gained recognition and respect through generations in the ranks of diplomats of UN member States and UN staff, and has distinguished the Quakers' role from other non-governmental representation, a role to which we will return.

Meanwhile, some new program ideas were being hatched on the westerly side of this Friendly alliance. The American Friends Service Committee was interested, after the Second World War, in bringing new ideas to Washington and using some of the techniques developed through the Friends International Centers and the International Seminars Program. Clarence Pickett, executive secretary of AFSC, with the help of Gilbert White, his assistant, had secured Davis House to serve as a Friends Center in Washington. With the first Davis House director, Harold Snyder, they initiated the Washington Seminars Program in 1951. The idea was to expose leaders in Washington to the most recent thinking from the social sciences relevant to effective government and global stability. Harold Snyder arranged monthly seminars for people at the assistant secretary of department and bureau chief levels, to hear

from and discuss social and economic policy with leading thinkers from universities around the country. The Washington Seminars Program ran with enthusiastic participation from a core of upper-level government officials for some five years. They were off-the-record and no formal reports seem to have been circulated, but both James Matlack, recent director of Davis House, and Gilbert White, who had helped to initiate the program and then chaired many of its meetings, believe that Harold Snyder had drafted a detailed and thoughtful history of the Washington Seminar Program. The manuscript, however, seems to have disappeared after Harold's death. (5.)

The Washington Seminars again demonstrated a creative and effective method for Friends' work with policy makers. Though keyed to people in national government rather than diplomats, the Washington Seminars program has two important links to our story. One is its methodology. The format of these Seminars initiated what was to become the classic Quaker conference model of gathering peers of similar rank and assignment, representing important partners in governance. Members of the seminar participate in their personal capacities, receiving orientation and stimulation for their discussion from a few relevant experts. The seminar is arranged to give a thorough, structured though off-the-record discussion to topics of mutual concern, the results of which are for internalizing, to inform the individual perspectives of participants and assist them in their own work and policy environments upon return to their duties. Secondly, both in the AFSC's organizational thinking and external funding, the Washington Seminars led directly into the next phase of this history, to a program explicitly called the Quaker Conferences and Seminars for Diplomats. This program ran largely without a break from 1952 to 1978, with side channels to West Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe.

Sydney Bailey, a British Friend who was closely involved with the Conferences for Diplomats, in his book *Peace is a Process*, drolly describes the relationship between London and Philadelphia at the program's start in 1952. Although British Friends began co-sponsoring the program from 1960, in 1952 they felt that the Americans, not for the first time, were on the wrong track. Diplomats, in the British view, would have neither time nor inclination to spend a week or more together under private auspices. And even if they did it was believed that as mouthpieces of central authorities their discussion could bear little fruit. But the program was prodigiously successful. Between 1952 and 1976 more than 1,400 diplomats passed through the Quaker Conferences program. Tracking the career progress of Conference alumni showed that in the mid-1970s these diplomats were serving in 155 cities around the globe. Many went on to national and international leadership positions, from where they have continued to provide important contacts for Quaker peace work. This writer has personally heard from senior diplomats from lands as diverse as Sweden, Argentina, the USA, Yugoslavia, Nigeria, Japan, and Egypt, among others, that the Quaker Conferences they attended early in their careers really opened their eyes to the potential of the profession of multilateral diplomacy.

The AFSC was building on several strengths in creating this program. One was the success and clear usefulness of their Washington Seminars for policy makers. Another was the need they perceived for a new post-war, UN-era vision of the role of international diplomacy. And a third was a timely grant from the Ford Foundation of funds that the Foundation discovered it would like to move out before the end of the year, and had contacted Clarence Pickett to hear whether he had any suggestions.

Initiation of the Conferences and Seminars for Diplomats Program

Harold Snyder, director of the Washington Seminars and former director of the Commission on Occupied Territories, which had given him intergovernmental experience, was sent to Europe in early 1952 to explore how conferences might be organized at the international level along the lines of the Washington Seminars, using Ford funding. The idea initially pursued was to organize a seminar program for "public opinion influencers": government officials, business professionals, journalists and others. Harold set up in Paris with several local Quakers -scholars and UNESCO officials with whom he was acquainted- as advisers. The task proved very difficult. He took a weekend in The Hague with Hans Boon, director general of the Dutch Foreign Office whom he had known as a neighbor in Washington during WWII, when Boon was the Dutch ambassador. Hans Boon suggested that Harold experiment that summer with a conference for diplomats. Boon knew the directors of all the European Foreign Offices and could help with introductions. Harold's Paris advisers accepted the idea and off they went, with the first conference to take place in August of 1952. The site chosen -felicitously, as it served the program for over two decades- was the St. Georges School for Girls, free for the summer holidays, at Clarens, Switzerland, near Montreux on the northeast shore of Lake Geneva.

Two principles drove the logic of the program. One was the recognition of a central new theme to the intergovernmental dialogue, that of multilateralism. This implied a new role for States as members of a re-conceived global community in the United Nations, and a new role for diplomats as interlocutors in a *multilateral* dialogue. Whereas diplomacy had previously been about the business of representing the interests of your State in regard to another State (bilateral relations) or small group of States (allies, treaty partners, trading cartels, etc.), after World War Two a whole new and to some degree overriding dimension had been added to international affairs. Each government as a signatory of the international treaty that is the Charter of the United Nations had a new range of responsibilities in relation to the family of nations, and it is important to note, not just to the governments but also to the *peoples* of this family: "We the Peoples of the United Nations…". This new twist on diplomacy was used as the general theme for most of the Quaker conferences for diplomats in their first decade, and underlies essentially all of the more than one hundred conferences and seminars for diplomats through the life of the program, with various subtitles appropriate to the specific time and the group. Its general formulation was *"Diplomacy in a Changing World: National Interest and International Responsibility."*

The second underlying principle of the Conferences for Diplomats was the view - in contrast to what British Friends might have thought- about the discretionary role of diplomats stated in AFSC's 1952 funding proposal to the General Service Foundation:

- ♣ attitudes of governments toward other governments have a basis in the human relationships of their representatives;
- ♣ heads of foreign departments become spokesmen for policies evolved by the permanent staff whose careers center around certain geographical portions of the world, and
- ♣ obscure people in government service often determine foreign policy.

This last point really stands things on their head, implying that countries' foreign ministers (e.g., the US Secretary of State) are in large part interpreting the views of their expert professional staff rather than the reverse. But in whatever degree this

holds true, the Conferences Program was meant to recognize that diplomats have an important perceptive, interpretive, and interactive role to play in the conduct of foreign affairs, especially in the era of multilateralism.

Obviously the first challenge in arranging such a conference would lie in finding suitable participants. Carrying an invitation laying out the basic premises of the program, Harold Snyder and his assistant Martha Biehle (a dean of Stephens College) divided between them the capitals of Europe (at this stage only Western Europe) and North America and set out recruiting candidates for participation. Martha Biehle brought skills and experience in developing such a meeting. Her career had included staffing the National Council on Religion and Higher Education in New Haven and its annual meeting for fellows and board members: the "Week of Work". One element transferred from the W-of-W was that of including spouses and children to strengthen an informal ambience around a conference.

Using introductions from Hans Boon and the many contacts in governments that Harold Snyder and Friends working in post-war relief and rehabilitation had acquired, appointments would be made to visit senior officers in policy or personnel divisions of foreign ministries. The Quaker visitors would ask to interview eligible staff to identify candidates for invitation to the planned conference. Where capitals were too removed to be visited in person -particularly as the program reached first into Asia and then to Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Africa- the ambassadors of these countries in European capitals or in Washington would be visited to secure embassy officers as participants or recommendations of nominees to be sent from home capitals. As the program grew, Quaker staff in those regions would help with the introductions and the interviewing of candidates.

Bright, capable young diplomats were the type sought; those with enough experience to know their profession, but young enough to be open to new perspectives presented in a collegial gathering. They would ideally be in line for appointment to major assignments in the next five to ten years, where they would influence foreign policies of their governments as ministers, ambassadors, chiefs of departments, and chief delegates to the United Nations and to international conferences. These would be people between thirty and forty-five years of age, in mid-career at counsellor or first-secretary rank, "not too old or rigid in thought to learn from each other, and not too immature and inexperienced to contribute to the process of mutual education" (from the 1953 Clarens report). In regard to this educational objective, it can be noted that AFSC soon began to term the overall undertaking the "Leadership Conferences Program" in its committees and internal reports.

The idea that the candidate finally receiving an invitation was the personal selection of the Quaker Conference staff was only partially achieved in practice. Staff estimated in the early years that they were directly choosing about half of those attending, with the remainder selected by their governments, whether for convenience and availability or simply on governmental prerogative. In their confidential evaluations of the first conferences, staff admit that they did not in fact find much difference in the quality of participation between those they had chosen and those who were assigned to them. But the visits and interviewing were certainly a worthwhile exercise in any case. The practice built recognition and understanding within foreign ministries for Friends' objectives, and gave the conference staff that opportunity, so important in the long-term development of the conference model over its many permutations, of hearing from potential participants and their superiors their perspectives, needs, and expectations regarding the conference themes. This sharing at a preparatory stage serves the double purpose of providing staff with ideas for how to balance and regulate the topics of the conference agenda, and of giving participants a sense of involvement with the identification of issues and positions that need airing. The desired outcome is that as many people as

possible arrive with a sense of having "bought in" to the subject and the structure of the conference.

In addition to these important functions of pre-conference visits and interviews, Harold Snyder's approach illustrates another vital element: to legitimize the assertion that the invitation comes to the diplomat in his or her private and personal capacity, and that he or she is asked to attend as a guest of the Quakers and not as a designated or instructed representative of a government. Whether this was in fact totally the case was not under Friends control, but the Conference staff was nevertheless engaged in demonstrating their terms in issuing the invitations, and giving notice that the arrangements and the conduct of the meeting would respect these terms.

Formative Years of the Conferences for Diplomats

The first Quaker Conference for Diplomats in 1952 hosted twenty-five participants, with an average age of thirty-six, from fifteen countries. These included the USA and Canada, Yugoslavia as the "non-aligned" member of the Eastern bloc, and twelve of the leading democracies of Western Europe. Notably absent were representatives from the dictatorships of the Iberian Peninsula, though within a few years they would be invited, and Britain. The British foreign ministry refused the invitation, taking the initial stand that the conference terms were not suitable for British participation, in line with a blanket ruling forbidding any government representative to discuss British policy outside of their official functions (making understandable, in this light, the skepticism of British Friends). But the Conference staff, along with their allies in Quaker service in London, Washington and Geneva, kept their British foreign ministry contacts well informed concerning the planning, participation and outcome of the first conference, and Britain sent participants to both conferences when two were held the next year at Clarens, and took part every year thereafter.

Harold Snyder writes in his report on the first Clarens meeting, "The key to a smooth running conference experience is obviously the leadership provided." In fact the leadership provided for this and subsequent conferences was, almost without exception, remarkable. Leadership was of two kinds: that of the chairpersons, and that of the resource persons or consultants who presented ideas to lead off discussions on the agenda's sub-themes. Chairing of the first Clarens was to be shared by Gilbert White, then president of Haverford College, and Ralph Bunche, at that time the Principal Director of the Department of Trusteeship of the United Nations. Shortly before the event a spinal ailment put Ralph Bunche out of play, and he was replaced by John R. Rees, M.D., Director of the World Federation of Mental Health, and Alva Myrdal, Director of the Social Sciences Department of UNESCO (UN Education, Science and Culture Organization) and later a Nobel Peace Prize winner (1982).

Alva Myrdal and John Rees were drawn from among the twelve "consultants" who served as experts on topics related to the theme of the conference. Myrdal also led discussion on "Recent Developments in the Social Sciences having a bearing on International Relations", and Rees on "International Relations as Human Relations." Without naming the other ten, it is useful to note the level of experience these resource people brought to the group of young diplomats. The consultants included the Director of the European Office of the UN; deans from Universities of Saarbrücken and Paris; the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (Alva's husband Gunnar Myrdal); the first Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (retired) on the topic "Meeting the Needs and Aspirations

of the Common Man"; the UN High Commissioner for Refugees; the Assistant Director General of the International Labor Office; and the Director General of the World Health Organization. It also included Elmore Jackson, already serving as Quaker UN Representative in New York, with prior experience as Political Officer and Personal Assistant to the UN Representative for India and Pakistan, speaking on "Mediation of International Disputes". In examples from AFSC archives of the diplomats' evaluations of the conference and from their letters of appreciation, they were, indeed, astounded by the talent and level of discourse of this roster. Not least, in this and succeeding conferences, the effect was to raise considerably the regard that diplomats felt for UN staff and the operations of its numerous sub-bodies.

This impression was not lost on foreign ministries. By 1954 it was becoming usual that participants' time at the Quaker Diplomats Conferences was counted outside their annual leave, from which it had been earlier deducted as they were attending in their personal capacities. Again, as with the "personal invitation" assumption of the conference arrangements, as long as the conference functioned on the basis of Friends' terms, the staff was glad to have the ministries' assistance in picking their topnotch candidates and allowing them to attend on duty time. Another early result of the quality and success of the Program was that the age and rank of participants began to rise, not necessarily in accordance with the intentions of the Conference staff. Also, to meet the rise in demand, it became common practice from 1953 to hold two conferences in Europe each year, with additional conferences and seminars for diplomats increasingly offered elsewhere around the world. The original funding proposal for the Conference Program describes the projected 1952 meeting as an experiment, a testing of the idea of working with diplomats in this fashion, and suggests that if successful a program of eight such conferences would be attempted. As mentioned, more than one hundred conferences and seminars for diplomats had been hosted under the program by 1976.

The agenda of the Conference was planned to lead participants into increasing engagement with the theme of "National Interest and International Responsibility" and with each other. As is clear from the speakers list, the theme was given a breadth and depth that participants had probably not perceived before, let alone discussed with colleagues from other countries. It is a recurrent remark in participants' evaluations that they had indeed never entered into much discussion with these colleagues at all, even from friendly countries, outside of official business. So to engage one another on topics such as the roles of human relations and nationalism in international affairs was certainly a remarkable experience. It is difficult today for us to reach back over fifty years and understand the isolation that characterized the players in international affairs at the beginning of this era, and the significance of Friends addressing this as a central theme. As the participant from the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote to Harold Snyder when he had returned to his post at the end of August 1952, "One could have thought that you had undertaken a perilous venture, and it was so: to bring together some thirty diplomats of different countries for a ten-day period…. Not only were you able to keep discussions interesting during the ten days, but also you created a sentiment of friendship between members present. You gave me a chance to meet colleagues in a way that I could never have met them elsewhere, and I have greatly benefited from this." And this was just the Belgian speaking! We may forget how divided Europe was at mid-century.

Topics on the conference agenda were treated not so much for the transfer of a quantum of information as a stimulus to dialogue. Despite the outstanding roster of speakers, only two formal presentations were made as a rule in the early years: on the opening evening to introduce the overall theme, and on the final evening to bring focus back to center. Brock Chisholm, the first Director General of the World Health

Organization, first a consultant and later a chairman over nearly fifteen years of conferences, became accomplished at giving the closing talk on "Developing a Sense of International Responsibility." Otherwise the consultants were asked to introduce their topics informally for evening plenary sessions of the group, relating how they had dealt with the issues in their own lives and careers.

The mornings were devoted to small-group discussions of the topics presented on the previous evening, and closed before lunch with a short plenary session to hear reports from the discussion groups. Participants themselves served as chairpersons and rapporteurs for the small groups. A steering committee of six to eight participants was appointed by the conference chairs to help guide program details and monitor the progress of the discussions, tuning topics and their timing to the needs expressed in the colloquy.

In general, the sequence followed was that the first few days were used to bring out the rough dimensions of the theme –definition, historical aspects, scope, spiritual and moral factors, and its psychological and human relations aspects. The middle period of the conference was designed to consider the most pressing social and economic problems demanding international attention and cooperation. And during the final days, some of the most hopeful new developments in the social sciences and the settlement of international disputes were introduced for examination.

Among diplomat alumni, it became a common reference to speak of the "Clarens experience." Staff gave considerable time and energy to making the most amenable environment for the ten days or more of the meetings; or, in the words of the brochure given to foreign ministries in recruiting: "…to promote the greatest possible friendly acquaintance." St. George's School was only slightly more institutional than a large chateau, set in the sloping vineyards looking south over Lake Geneva to the Savoy Alps. There was also a small chalet on the property that served for housing those who brought families, and through the years the school expanded its dormitory space. There were three tennis courts and a beach below, for the hearty, for swimming in the glacier-fed lake.

"The conference rented a radio, and borrowed a record player and small library of records, motion picture projector, screen and films. A selected library of over 250 items, for the most part recent publications in the fields of international affairs, sociology and psychology, and including a number of UN publications, was borrowed from several sources. A small section of the library presented books on Quaker thought and practices" (Conference Report, 1952). At most of the conferences a Quaker meeting for worship was held before breakfast, open to whoever was interested.

The afternoons and the weekend from Saturday noon to Sunday supper were entirely free for recreation, study and informal fellowship. Excursions to points of interest in the vicinity were usually offered, including trips to the nearest alps, to cheese factories, wine producers, castles and museums. On at least one evening, free from scheduled discussion, it was usual to offer a program of music

Still, it was not uncommon for first-time attendees, accustomed as they would be to diplomatic regularities, to enter this sphere of "friendly acquaintance" with some skepticism if not foreboding. This is illustrated in the story about the Swiss diplomat who, as he later admitted to the chairman, Gilbert White, had his secretary in Bern call him every morning at the conference right after breakfast, so he could say that he had been ordered back to his post if he decided he wanted to leave. Another time a British diplomat and his wife told the chairmen at the end that they had rented a house in a village nearby for the two weeks of the conference, to which they could skip when they had had enough of this "informality." They had not used it after all and had been more than pleased to stay.

Staffing of the Conferences

Staffing of the Conferences and Seminars for Diplomats Program initially consisted of a director and an associate director. As time went on this involved different people in the various regions where the ConSem program operated: Geneva, Washington/New York, South Asia, Japan, and West Africa. Each location had an administrative assistant or two also helping at conference time, a position sometimes filled by the wife of the director (Martha Biehle in 1953 and '54 was the only female program director, unassisted by a spouse). The annals of the Program abound with stories of all that can go wrong, at the least convenient times, and ways to put them right. The husband and wife team of Paul and Jean Johnson, who directed the program with distinction from Geneva from 1959-'68, came to refer to Jean as the V.P. for Small Emergencies during conference time. She earned the title for having solved the problem of no stoppers for washbasins at a conference site in Romania. There is also her story of arriving at the site of the first Quaker Conference for diplomats in South Asia, at Peredeniya University in Sri Lanka, and finding the dormitories a total shambles. First the Quaker team and consultants who had arrived early were put to cleaning the place and then cloths, buckets, and brooms were distributed so that participants were given charge of cleaning their own quarters and baths during the two-week colloquium.

The Conference staff was assisted on site by a small group of Friends usually referred to as the Quaker core, or the team. Often bringing their families, this group would make four to eight additional adults to help with everything from getting discussion groups flowing, to leading excursions and serving coffee. As the diplomats were encouraged to bring their families to strengthen the residential and informal atmosphere, albeit at their own expense, the presence of the Quaker core groups' families made an important "mixing" element. All told, with the support team, consultants, spouses, and children, the actual number of diplomats participating was sometimes only a third of the total. Still, bringing families was generally appreciated for making the conferences quite different from other meetings that diplomats attended. But there could be too much of a good thing. In the report of the 1956 conferences, the director registers concern with the numbers: "… the number of wives and children of consultants outnumbered that of participants and if this could be reversed it would be more useful to the major objectives of the conferences." That summer there were, at Clarens VII and VIII, 23 children and 33 diplomats, and 17 children and 32 diplomats respectively.

Expansion and Diversification of the ConSem Program

While most of the above description of a conference is based on the first years in the mid-fifties, it represents a model of surprising durability. This is certainly due in part to the strong continuity of persons leading and supporting the program. Gilbert White continued to chair the Clarens conferences on and off for more than two decades. In 1953 he was joined by Ralph Bunche to lead two, two-week conferences, a credit to the innovative and engaging nature of the meetings and a testimony to the serious regard in which United Nations personnel held them. Many Friends and non-Friend leaders, like Brock Chisholm, Lord Caradon, Lester Pearson, Philip Noel-Baker, were willing to follow the program around the world to help lead and support the conferences. And immense support and stability were added by the recurrent participation of individuals and couples in the Quaker core, largely from the Friends service committees and councils. They are too numerous to name.

But even with the basic model in hand, a number of elements in the program were kept under close review and adjusted through time. Concerns were chiefly for the diversity of participants, the emphasis of subject matter, and conference locations. Diversity of representation was a central consideration from the start. There was a continuous effort to recruit women both as participants and as consultants out of the low number in the foreign services. The diplomats were all men in the first conference, but this was noted as a weakness and the situation gradually improved through the years. Women, then as today, do not particularly like to hear that they are being invited because they are women, so it is an issue requiring both perseverance and tact. With Martha Biehle recruiting in the foreign ministries, and Alva Myrdal and other outstanding women sharing leadership of the meetings, there was certainly an unconventional sub-text to the arrangements. However, as several wives reported in interviews for this history, the role assignment among Friends at that time still largely reflected male-oriented society.

It was felt that the first time out, in 1952, to test the waters, it was sufficient to see how foreign ministries in the Western democracies would respond to the invitation and how their diplomats would perform under these conditions and utilize the opportunity. With Clarens I working as well as it did, a broadening of the participant base began the next year with the inclusion of eleven Asians along with fifteen Europeans and North Americans at Clarens II. Clarens III that same summer included a participant from the Middle East, from Iran. Hereafter Asians were regular attendees, drawn chiefly from India, Ceylon (not to be Sri Lanka until 1972), Burma, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan, and Thailand. Spain and Portugal were also added to the European list.

Engaging the Middle East

While the Middle East was of major interest not only to Friends but also to diplomats attending the conferences - this gap was regularly mentioned in their post-conference evaluations- it was difficult to bring Israelis and Arabs together as participants. In the Arab-Israeli standoff, neither side wanted to be tainted by any international contacts that might look conciliatory. At first it was extremely hard simply getting fertile and responsive contacts within Middle Eastern ministries of foreign affairs. Despite refusals, invitations to the Quaker Conferences were extended to both Israel and its neighbors on a regular basis. Finally, though Iran would participate with Israelis (two Israelis and an Iranian were in Clarens V in 1955), it became usual for Israel to have representatives at one of the two sessions at Clarens each year while diplomats from Arab countries would attend the other. Sometimes experts or academicians could be drawn from the two simultaneously. There is the story of the Arab diplomat, who in the final evening's festivities asked the Israeli expert's beautiful university-age daughter to dance, and everything stopped, it was so moving and they danced so well. He asked a bit abashedly the next morning if this could please avoid being mentioned back among his colleagues.

The AFSC and FSC saw that the situation required patience and gradualism. The effort invested in getting invitations placed with the ministries of Middle East countries starting in 1953 didn't begin to pay off until 1956, with participation for the first time by Egypt and Iraq, as well as Turkey which had participated at an earlier conference designated under "Asia." This was progress, even though the conference staff had made personal visits to deliver invitations to Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey. In time -that is by the mid-1960s- all these countries plus Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, and Libya would be sending

capable young diplomats. The participant lists include names of future foreign ministers of these countries, as is true among those attending from other regions.

Even with their diplomats in (albeit rotating) attendance, the Israeli-Arab dispute as a conference topic itself -or even less confrontational approaches such as potential areas for wider cooperation in the Middle East- remained off bounds for the Conference Program. Still, Western and Asian diplomats -and beginning in the late 1950s Africans and the early '60s South Americans- appreciated the contact and opportunity to talk over global approaches, if not regional issues, with Middle Eastern colleagues who could put forward problems and perspectives for general discussion regarding the Middle East without violating the most sensitive taboos.

There was also an occasion in the mid-seventies when an Arab ambassador asked the conference director if a discreet meeting could be arranged with the Israeli diplomat off-site. From eleven in the evening at a restaurant some miles away, and with the director sitting in, the two talked for several hours around the question of what kind of reception an Arab peace initiative would be met with in Israel. One of these two diplomats sat in on the historic meeting with Sadat when he flew to Israel to see Begin in 1979. This is a case, of course, in which the Quakers had absolutely no part, but it does suggest potential side benefits of the off-the-record conference atmosphere.

Opening to Eastern Europe

For years, invitations placed through foreign ministry channels of African and South American countries (as well as Australia and New Zealand for that matter) were refused or ignored, though the reputation of the Quaker Conferences Program was growing within Western and Asian foreign ministries. In time, states from these regions began to send representatives. But initially it was among Eastern European governments that Friends saw the most pressing need to open access and participation.

The importance of getting Eastern and Western Europeans together was paramount in the original conception of the Conferences for Diplomats Program and was already something that Friends had worked on for decades. Among Conference staff and participants polled between 1952 and '54, inclusion of Soviet-bloc countries was seen to be desirable though difficult. Of diplomats responding to the question in 1954, sixteen were for and eight against. The responses suggest that not only did they fear that the rules for choosing participants would be altered, for example, but also the internal working of the Conference itself -treatment of topics, functioning of the discussion groups, and so on. In 1955, AFSC staff and volunteers (Douglas Steere of Haverford College was very helpful at this time) assisted the Quaker Conference staff by making visits with invitations to four Eastern European countries (Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and USSR), three African countries and seven in the Middle East. The result of this extensive effort was two Israelis and one African diplomat. (The last, interestingly, proved to be an important contact later when Friends were assisting with communications between the sides in the war of liberation in Rhodesia.)

Finally Poland and USSR sent participants to Clarens VIII in 1956, four persons between them. The predictions, mostly from Western foreign ministries where Friends had brought the question for discussion over several years, that the tone and atmosphere of the conference would disintegrate and that none of the diplomats would risk saying something that might be quoted out of context later, proved to be inflated. Quoting from Barry Hollister in the director's report:

> The important thing that did happen was that they discussed their various systems, defended them as well as they could, but they did it with an absence of polemics. For the non-communists it must have been a meaningful experience to have to rely on logic and not emotional opinion. For the communists it must likewise have been a meaningful experience to see a group of non-communists in such a setting as the conference, where blind assertions about the accomplishments of the monolithic states simply drew no response and therefore required more reason, logic and facts (to make a case). There is little doubt that the presence of East Europeans resulted in more intensive interest on the part of all members of the conference, and perhaps even resulted in more of a group feeling than has been experienced in other conferences.
>
> For the conference program itself this was a major test. Was the setting and the atmosphere created adequate to handle a major conflict situation? It seemed to be, for after the use of offensive language by one consultant, at which time it seemed as if the conference might slide back into the spirit of the cold war, within 24 hours there was more of a group feeling than existed before. The differences had finally come out, all had held them back and once the air was cleared the conference could go on to an even closer feeling of fellowship, if not agreement.

The participants' evaluations from this conference were very positive on the value of the experience, specifying the range of countries and wide exchange of views.

In 1957 and following, Eastern European participation increased and became an added strength of the program, something again that was not being offered elsewhere. After a 1957 Clarens, a US diplomat told the Quaker staff that this was the first time he had had the opportunity to talk to a Soviet diplomat outside of meeting rooms or official receptions. By 1958 Czech, Romanian and Hungarian diplomats were also participating. In an interesting sidelight, the Yugoslavs, who had been regulars since the beginning as "non-aligned," stopped coming during the first surge of new players from their region, whether to avoid a regressive identification with that group or something else, we will not know. Staff had a sense that the decision to withdraw came from a higher source than the foreign ministry. East Germany remained a special case for many years as a State that was not recognized by the West and whose participation was threatened with a Western boycott. We will return to that problem.

With the entry of Eastern Europeans into the Conference program came the appearance of topics relevant to their region, including "some problems of economic cooperation between the East and West," "atoms, the friends of humanity," and "some aspects of Polish foreign policy." While it was not the purpose of the Diplomats Conferences to deal with current affairs, the issues addressed were very close to the cutting edge of what diplomats perceived to be the scope and significance of their work. The Conferences were geared both to expand the bounds of current perceptions and to consolidate acceptance of the visionary new world order introduced by the coming of the United Nations, de-colonization, and the increasing definition of acceptable international behavior by treaties.

Inter-racial mixing was another important influence on the meetings' atmosphere, and the associations of any topic discussed. For Asians and Africans and their families to live for the better part of a fortnight with Europeans and Americans and their families was a new experience for all, and certainly influenced the way diplomats looked upon and responded to each other. Remember that this was during or not long after colonial liberation for many of these countries, and diplomats found it intriguing and challenging to see how this new equality fit.

The broader mix of representatives also expanded the range of topics that could be usefully discussed. The overall theme of "national interest and international responsibility" or some variation such as "the role of diplomacy in a changing world," or "the changing role of diplomacy in an interdependent world", was continuously probed in both its political and its human/philosophical aspects. Of the latter, questions were raised such as, "what is the source and significance of the positive moral force for governance?" and "rational and irrational fear as a cause of tension, and what remedies can be applied?" Already with the first meetings including Asians in the mid-1950's, topics of inter-regional significance were added, such as "colonialism and the role of the U.N.," "problems of countries emerging from colonial control," and "am I my brother's keeper –reflections on aid to underdeveloped countries" (a topic led off by E.F. (Fritz) Schumacher of "Small is Beautiful" fame).

Diversifying Locations

St. George's School at Clarens, in addition to having the desirable atmosphere, flexibility of space and quality of service, was also centrally located in a neutral country near the United Nations headquarters in Europe. But AFSC and Friends Service Council of Britain and Ireland quickly registered a demand for this type of service beyond Lake Geneva. Two tacks were taken: one was to develop new series of conferences in other regions of the globe -first in Asia, then Eastern Europe and West Africa; and second, to start up a shorter version of the program, in the form of seminars particularly aimed at more senior diplomats, held along the Washington/New York axis and known as the "Minister-Counsellor Weekend Seminar Program." This was the seminar part of what AFSC at the time called the ConSem Program.

The Asian Diplomats Conference series began in Ceylon in 1955 and hosted nine meetings up to 1969, with other sites in India, Indonesia, Nepal, and Khmer Republic (Cambodia). The first conference in Eastern Europe was held in Warsaw in 1960, with ten more following in that region up to 1974. Diplomats Conferences in Japan, a separate division of the overall program, was begun in 1965 and sponsored twelve meetings up to 1976. Twenty-five Minister-Counsellor Weekend Seminars were organized in the United States between 1959 and 1976, alternately in Virginia, West Virginia, and at Mohonk Mountain House ninety miles north of New York City. And a bilingual program in West Africa begun in 1963 sponsored dozens of "international dialogues" and six major conferences bringing together foreign service officials and non-diplomat policy specialists from the sixteen countries of formerly French and British West Africa.

Reaching out to new regions with the Conferences and Seminars Program achieved several objectives. For one, it meant that a greater number of participants could be incorporated from that region in each meeting, so that they made the majority instead of Westerners, as was usual at Clarens. Secondly, there was greater acceptance and support from ministries in these countries for the conference concept, and for their level of participation, when it was held in their backyard. The organizers could thus reach more deeply and rewardingly into the ranks of these governments for capable participants. Thirdly, for Western diplomats who participated from their stations in these regions, it richly enhanced their contacts and understanding, as well as respect, for regional affairs. A senior Swedish diplomat recounted in the 1990s near the end of his distinguished career that his participation in the 1965 conference at Siam Reap, in what is now Cambodia, "…opened my eyes

to the dynamics of the region and the requirements for its peace and development, and in turn what my own job called for".

The general conference model did not vary greatly no matter where meetings were held. They still attracted impressively top-notch resource persons to kick off discussions (and note, there was never any honorarium offered to any of these consultants outside of covering their expenses) and discerning chairpersons. And the conferences were very much of interest to the local and national authorities where they were held. This celebrity carried its hazards as well as advantages, as two stories illustrate:

Brewster Grace remembers the second Asian Diplomats Conference held at Siam Reap in 1969 that attracted none other than Prince Sihanouk to host the opening dinner, a fabulous affair with uncountable dishes, held in a palace near the conference site. While this was the kind of invitation that couldn't be refused, the conference staff naturally had some uneasiness for the significance and the tone that this start might lend to the meeting. But they felt that things were pretty much under control as the evening drew to a close. The thank-yous were said and they were about to withdraw when a Western delegate incautiously inquired of the Prince what his highness thought of the prospects for the Khmer Republic. The answer was given in a four-hour-long speech.

In another story that staff told on themselves, at the 1966 conference in Sinaia, Romania, local authorities insisted on sitting downstairs in the building where the meetings were taking place, as though they needed to keep an eye on the propriety of conference proceedings, those who came in and out, and so forth. It was not long into the second week when staff found that -retiring to the kitchen area as had become their habit- the visitors had drunk up all the dinner wine.

Inclusion of the German Democratic Republic

One of the problems pursued in the second decade of the ConSem Program was how to deal with East Germany's lockout. The issue was that the German Democratic Republic, not being recognized by Western alliance countries, was off-limits for diplomatic contacts of any type, formal or informal. Through the 1950s and early '60s there was little question of involving GDR diplomats directly. Indeed, it is now difficult to sense the insularity of East Germany during this period, something akin to North Korea in the more recent past: a closed authoritarian society locked away from the outer world. The official Western policy, taking its cue from the leadership of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn, was that the GDR was an illegal state and should be treated as a pariah. Quakers saw the building of the Berlin Wall in August of 1961 not simply as a confirmation of the iron heel of socialism, but in part a result of the Western policy of non-recognition. Friends' response was to establish a Quaker International Affairs Representative in the area, beginning with the arrival of Roland Warren in 1962 and followed by Robert Reuman, then William Beittel and others. These QIARs worked at opening channels of dialogue first within and gradually between the two Germanys until 1973, when East Germany (the GDR) was officially recognized. The Quaker Conferences for Diplomats Program was one among several of the instruments applied in this conciliation work by Friends.

Bridging between East and West Germany was at best slow work, where even small forms of progress had to be prepared very carefully (a history engagingly recounted by Mike Yarrow in a chapter of his *Quaker Experiences in International Conciliation*). In the Diplomats Conferences, for a long while this boat was rowed with one oar. Though Berlin, after 1961, was one of the most critical flashpoints in the world, and East-West dialogue was one of the Conferences' initial major objectives,

the Program by the end of 1965 had included forty-five diplomats from West Germany and none from the East. The object, of course, was not simply to balance numbers but to open dialogue between the parts, and between the allies, of this deeply divided country. Friends felt it was necessary to push this issue forward, albeit cautiously. The first device was to include, as in dealing with the Middle East, non-diplomatic participants as consultants. This was accomplished at the conference in Sinaia, Romania, in 1966, with two West German consultants and an East German. But the director, Paul Johnson, who had been accompanying Roland Warren in discussions in Berlin and Bonn, added a twist. Several days into the conference, in Paul's thinking to support the lone East German consultant, the GDR ambassador in Bucharest was contacted and asked to send one of his officers -not as an official participant but as Paul's personal guest. Fortunately the man sent was up to this difficult role, actually an officer in the Ministry of Education on loan to the embassy. While not attending the morning small group discussions or taking the floor in plenary sessions, he was able to engage volubly in the informal discussions that ranged in all corners around the day's schedule. According to reports, he and his countryman were kept at it until the early hours of the mornings by Western colleagues hungry to hear from able East German spokespersons.

No participants from the GDR were invited in 1967, partly because of the absence of a QIAR in Berlin that year. In 1968 the expedient of a "guest of the director" was again used with the agreement that this would allow for participation in all groups and meetings without listing the person as an official member of the conference. In planning for the 1969 conferences the QIAR in Berlin, William Beittel, and the new Conference Program director in Geneva, Stephen Thiermann, decided to go for broke and officially invite a GDR diplomat to one of the Clarens meetings that year. While this was well received in Berlin, the FRG seems to have taken their consideration of a response to the highest levels in Bonn and among their allies. With difficult elections for Willy Brandt coming in the fall of 1969 (though Brandt had appreciated the Quakers as supporters of his dawning Östpolitik when he was mayor of Berlin in the early 1960s) and wishing to give no fuel to the anti-communist columns or to indicate a softening of FRG policy to the Western alliance, the threatened boycott was carried out. The NATO group's policy was that Western diplomats would not be allowed to participate in any meeting, however informal, where questions of recognition of the GDR could be a topic for discussion. To the chagrin of the Quakers, it soon became clear that a general NATO boycott was underway, with refusals of invitations by the USA and Britain joined by Italy and France, and even last minute regrets from a participant and a consultant from Canada, the latter an experienced retired ambassador who had an important role on the agenda. Only Norway and Netherlands did not join the rout.

The ensuing conference was not very successful, over-weighted by non-diplomats and of the diplomats a preponderance from Eastern Europe, without Westerners to debate the central issues. But the taboo had been broken, and when Thiermann and Beittel revisited Bonn in January 1970, after Brandt's election victory, a new atmosphere prevailed. A high official in the Chancellor's office told them that the FRG expected the Quakers to persevere in their new policy and that they could count on West German participation and support. East Germany was eager to have its diplomats join the Quaker Conferences on a normal basis, at first still primarily plugging the issue of recognition. But as recognition drew near (the result of the "general treaty" of December 1972 and another electoral victory for Brandt) the GDR's representatives began to report how helpful the Quaker conference experiences had proved for them personally and professionally. One perceptive participant related that their foreign service had spent so much effort on the question

of recognition that they hadn't properly learned the finer skills of multilateral diplomacy and that the Quaker conferences gave an opportunity to catch up.

The China Question

Friends' programs addressing other conflicts, continents away, were also linked to the Quaker Conferences and Seminars for Diplomats Program through the global network of Friends activities in peace work. The question of the recognition of China, like that of GDR, was an issue given considerable attention and choreographing by Friends. The Asian branch of the Conferences made regular, though unsuccessful, attempts to include Chinese representatives, locked out by a combination of threatened boycotts by other participants and by Chinese self-isolation. Friends had been divided on this issue among themselves, particularly in America where there was residual support for Taiwan among mid-western Quakers. By 1969 Friends were largely united in the view that the U.N. Charter's specification of "universality" of membership required that the Peoples Republic of China take the China seat in the Security Council.

After intensive consultations, Quaker service agencies launched a comprehensive push in support of this measure, engaging the two Quaker UN Offices, QIARs around the world, and the ConSem Program for Diplomats. The initiative included publications and lecture series to inform the Western public, and an intensive diplomatic campaign at the UN and in capitals, especially in the countries that were seen to be swing votes in the UN General Assembly. In 1970, a conference for diplomats was held at Rastenfeld, Austria, dealing exclusively with the question of China's UN representation. To be sure, other non-governmental organizations and a number of governments had also prioritized this issue. In 1971 the UN General Assembly restored "all rights to the People's Republic of China" and expelled the "representatives of Chiang Kai-shek" by a vote of 76 to 35. The first official delegation from an American non-governmental agency to visit the PRC was from the AFSC in 1972, when delegation members found that the work of the Friends Ambulance Unit during and following World War II was well remembered.

A Background for Quiet Diplomacy

The year in, year out "ministry for peace" performed in the Conferences and Seminars for Diplomats Program, as with the parallel work of the Quaker UN Offices and the Quaker International Affairs Representatives around the world, has been spoken of as "second-hand conciliation" or "mediation once removed." This is not meant in a derogatory way but recognizes a style that is required for the task of bringing together diverse groups of professional representatives for serious discussion on personal, open terms. In examining this style more closely, let us note how important the long-term, low-key contacts can be in laying the ground for the first-hand, upfront conciliation role when that is called for. Suffice it here with a few examples of Friends wider involvement in diplomacy from the 1960s and '70s at the height of the ConSem Program.

India and Pakistan

When the fragile standoff between India and Pakistan over Kashmir flamed again into war in the fall of 1965, Quakers were able to respond with a peace initiative

founded on three strands of association with the sub-continent. One was a century of humanitarian work, which had intensified during and following the Second World War. Large sums of money were raised in the mid-1940s by AFSC to provide relief in the great Bengal famine, in which some two million people died in large part as a consequence of the Allies blockade of shipping in the Bay of Bengal and compounded by floods. At the close of WWII the Friends agencies merged their representation into the Friends Service Unit. Indian authorities called on this Unit to assist the stream of refugees occasioned by the 1947 partition creating Pakistan. The Unit on its own initiative (somewhat to Indian chagrin, until Gandhi intervened and approved) had gone into Pakistan to help refugees on that side as well. This work was followed with programs for rural and urban development in both India and Pakistan. The second strand was a respectful relationship with the political leadership nurtured through decades of collaboration in the de-colonization process. The India Conciliation Group of British Friends had often provided the only link between the British viceroys and the Indian nationalists led by Gandhi and the Congress Party during the strenuous negotiations and standoffs from 1931 to independence in 1947. And lastly, and surely least, though not insignificant, were the contacts built through various forms of international seminars and conferences for diplomats.

Asian International Student Seminars started in 1950, and the Asian Conferences for Diplomats program, begun in 1955, had made the improvement of communications between Pakistan and India a major, though implicit, objective. Mike Yarrow cites the minutes of AFSC's International Conferences and Seminars Program Committee of 27 September, 1965: reflecting on the hostilities in Kashmir, staff reported to the Committee their calculation that two hundred Pakistanis had participated in international seminars and more than forty in conferences for diplomats. The estimates were somewhat higher for Indians.

With the war rapidly spreading along the Indo-Pakistani border, a three-person Quaker Peace Mission was appointed. It consisted of two British and an American (with the Pakistanis preferring to deal with Englishmen and the Indians preferring Americans, the team shifted leadership to oblige). All three had significant experience from and knowledge of South Asia and each was a seasoned Friend: Leslie Cross, Adam Curle, and Joe Elder. Gilbert White, chairing the committee in Philadelphia, notes their mandate "…would be one of listening, but with questions to present…one of the most important objectives would be slowly to create situations where questions of mutuality can be raised (like water resources, exchange of persons, common security, and the like)." The team worked for six weeks traveling between the two parties at the highest levels of government, while also having conversations with a broad range of the public to understand common perceptions. While they began as listeners, the team's role developed first through their valued interpretations for each party of the views and positions of the other, and from there to being asked for their own evaluations, and finally for their proposals. In all of this, though they had no official status or any concrete reputation as mediators, the team members and their advisors gave credit to the preceding thirteen years of association with a number of the principals through Conferences for Diplomats and the follow-up in capitals around the world and at UN headquarters. The Mission team felt this assisted in providing access to and credibility with a pragmatic -and in that sense, prudent and moderate- group in each government.

In the end, the Quaker contribution must be seen as a small piece in a large and complex situation. When the Mission team had communicated all of the proposals for amelioration that they had gathered, and had carried responses from each party back to the other, a final report was written and shared with both sides. Then the team withdrew, leaving follow up to official channels. In Yarrow's judgment their

contribution, though small-scale and without official sanction, was not inconsiderable: "Although at the time the process of changing perceptions was ineffective with the extremists, the important job was to strengthen the voices of moderation and support the truce against the strong forces of extremism on both sides…. So although the Quaker mission was unsuccessful in assisting any major breakthrough, by aiding the cooling-off process it did play a more important role than was anticipated." Through the end of the 1960s Harold and Betty Snyder (in yet another role in this saga) served as QIARs in the region, maintaining a confidential communication link between the two countries and even organizing three conferences in which senior Indians and Pakistanis participated.

The Civil War in Nigeria

As with the Indo-Pakistan war, Friends had identified the precursors to the Nigerian civil war of 1967-70 long before open hostilities began. The first QIARs were posted in Nigeria in 1960, and in 1962 Paul and Jean Johnson were pulled from their assignment running the Diplomats Conferences Program from Geneva to explore how conferences and seminars in West Africa might work. Jean staffed an office in Freetown, Sierra Leone (later moved to Togo) while Paul traveled between the sixteen countries of the region to take readings on what types of participants and topics would make for useful gatherings.

What he found confirmed the advice heard from West African acquaintances consulted by the AFSC home office. A general problem in the region was the lack of interface between the former French and British colonies. Referred to as francophone and anglophone, the divisions went much deeper than language, cleaving through commerce, communication, jurisprudence, finance, and forms of government, making progress towards regional cohesion and cooperation at the least difficult. Katharine Wood, who assisted in launching the West Africa program with her language skills and conference experience, quotes a participant in an early meeting saying, "In West Africa international relations have to be created from scratch." At the national level these countries, as elsewhere on the continent, shared the problem of pulling together a new national identity within their colonial borders, often among people widely separated by ethnicity, language, custom, and allegiance.

Representatives of French and English-speaking countries, at a planning meeting organized by Quakers in Ghana in April 1963, approved these two themes -regional coherence and national governance- to serve as the compass points for a West African seminar and conference program. Under joint sponsorship of American, Canadian, and British Friends twenty-nine meetings were held between 1963 and 1975. They were of two kinds. One was in the form of the Washington Seminars for national policy makers, bringing together university leaders, ambassadors, top-level ministry and departmental people from national governments, parliamentarians, representatives of international organizations, and media folk, while struggling to provide satisfactory translation. Twenty-three of these "Quaker International Dialogues" were organized in the twelve years of the West Africa program. The second variety of meetings was called a "Consultative Conference," of which six were held, with participants drawn from among those with experience of Quaker activities -from conferences, seminars, workshops in Africa and abroad- as an opportunity to strengthen ties across this group of acquaintances in the region, and to provide a sounding board for the continuing Quaker International Dialogues.

With the buildup of hostilities in Nigeria, a Quaker conciliation team made their first rounds through the region in 1967 to gather information and take stock of their access. They found that of the 78 people with whom they spoke, 35 had participated

in Friends' dialogue programs. This could be seen as a tautology, in that it was natural for Friends to speak to those whom they knew, yet it is an impressive number of people "connected" to a particular problem that could be called upon. As the Biafran War started in earnest, the Quaker team continued to develop their contacts both in and around Nigeria in an effort to provide conciliation.

The President of Niger, for one, met regularly with them, and suggested modes by which the Quakers could complement official bodies like the Organisation for African Unity, in which he took a leading role. In Nigeria, their association with the Conferences for Diplomats led the team into the highest levels of State. Both the principal secretary of Major General Gowon, the Nigerian head of state, and the permanent secretary for foreign affairs were familiar with Friends through the Conferences, which opened access for the first of many meetings they had with Gowon. This level of contact led in turn to access in the upper levels of the rebel leadership, and to its head, Lieutenant Colonel Ojukwu. As in most other instances of Quaker conciliation efforts, it is difficult to gauge the impact of their role in Nigeria. Even though it was the Commonwealth Secretariat that brought the two sides to the same table on several occasions, the Quakers were brought to attend these meetings in a semi-official capacity, serving as confidants of both sides, carrying messages and helping the organizers to evaluate positions.

The Quaker shuttle diplomacy generated a more serious and substantive exchange between the parties than did any public mediation. Both sides let Friends know that they depended on this function. In October 1968, at a meeting with seven members of the top Biafran leadership, the Chief Justice told Walter Martin and John Volkmar (Adam Curle, the third team member was not on this shift), "You see, you are the closest we can get to Lagos." And near the end of this dismal war, in October 1969, General Gowon let Friends know that he would like to try the Quaker channel once more to offer terms for a settlement, again rejected by Ojukwu of Biafra. Though no concrete result can be shown, there was certainly a contribution in continuing to put a human face on each side for the other, and perhaps ultimately to the magnanimity of the victors -when the end came quickly in January of 1970- and the spirit of reconciliation that immediately governed on both sides.

A Quaker Conciliation Model

The recounting of Friends peacemaking efforts above needs tempering, to say that it is not to claim that Quaker Conferences and Seminars for Diplomats were the foundation for this conciliation work. It is rather meant to demonstrate the value which Friends have experienced in having both low-key, long-term contacts with government representatives and agencies through the Conference and Seminars Programs, while maintaining a respectful and discretionary distance that allowed them to address relationships of justice and power in conflicts, and to respond with pragmatic honesty and spiritual obedience to calls for direct conciliation. There is a thread of operational similarity that runs between the two levels of work, the peacemaking at firsthand and at secondhand, evident in the following functions for peacemakers flagged by Mike Yarrow:

a) listening is a dual function of information gathering for the benefit of the listener, and of providing what Yarrow calls a "balanced partiality," that is, hearing out the person interviewed as a sympathetic listener, seeing and signaling that you understand their side;

b) serving as a channel of information concerning priorities and perceptions between those in the dialogue you are supporting, being confidential and circumspect while honoring the need for a sharing of views;

c) identifying the salient features of what is being said and what is left unsaid by the parties;

d) giving carefully balanced assessment on aspects of the situation that might serve as focal points or handles in moving the issues forward;

e) formulating agendas and arrangements by which the parties might be brought together to talk directly about their issues.

While the terms of a Quaker peace mission engaging parties to violent conflict are of a much stricter and graver significance than those of Quaker international affairs staff arranging conferences, the parallels help to underscore the validity of the approach and its relevance to various settings.

Achievements of the Conferences for Diplomats: a twenty-year perspective

After twenty years, the Conferences and Seminars for Diplomats Program began a transformation in 1972, a result of changing priorities in Friends organizations that provided administration and funding, combined with changing realities and needs in the intergovernmental dialogue. The Conferences Program had enjoyed a rapid takeoff from its start in 1952, extending within a few years to a scope -in terms of numbers, geography, and subject matter- far beyond the original vision.

The reputation and insight gained through the Conferences program served as a parallel and many not publicly recorded. Joe Elder has described their sense of continuity shared between Indo-Pakistan Mission colleagues in their worship before they were to meet the president of Pakistan in 1965, "…with each of us sharing his own sense of inadequacy at what we were trying to do, and yet each of us sensing something like a 'Quaker legacy' that we had been drawing on throughout the trip that provided a power well beyond what any of us individually possessed" (from a 1972 letter in the AFSC archives).

A telling sign of how close the original concept was on beam is that the signature theme, "National Interest and International Responsibility," played so durably in its various guises. In the 1961 back-to-back conferences at Clarens, with one group made up of half Asians and Africans and half from Europe, and the second group a wide mix of Eastern and Western Europeans, the sub-topic for both was "Opportunities and Responsibilities of the Smaller States for World Leadership in the 1960s." Quoting from the brochure which the Program gave to foreign ministries in gathering the 1961 roster of invitees: "Under this heading (The Role of Smaller States….) we can foresee special interest in developing the constructive role of the new States on the world scene; in the freedom of action enjoyed by the non-aligned States; in the necessity for the governments and peoples of the larger countries to understand and take into account the many explosive new influences in a swiftly changing world." Now that is the kind of subject matter which, given the proper mix of participants, a foreign ministry would not want to be left out of.

Diplomats were exposed, in a closed and safe environment, to question the very foundations of their profession –both their nations' policy objectives, and their own responsibilities, moral and professional, in forming and achieving those objectives. There is a report from a Conference session at Clarens when Ralph Bunche was in the chair and the presenter was the President of the All Pakistan Women's Association

and member of the Pakistani delegation to the UN General Assembly, Begum Liaquat Ali Khan. The Begum gave a short address on the need for integrity and high moral standards in world affairs, then with careful and encouraging handling by Ralph Bunche the discussion led into such questions as whether there ever arises a time when a diplomat should not follow instructions from his government, and what chance there is for the individual diplomat to put into effect his own ideals and moral standards in the job, and what honest reporting to governments means. In another meeting the participants heard from Paul Rykens, retired chairman of Unilever N.V., the Dutch conglomerate, on the positive and negative dynamics between international business and economic development. Participants reported that hearing from Rykens was like getting briefings from the ministries of scores of countries.

For twenty years the Quaker Conferences and Seminars programs for diplomats filled a singular niche. Whether held in Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa, or as Minister-Counselor Seminars on the American eastern seaboard, diplomats were given an experience unlike any other available. Although they were provided with outstanding resource persons, the atmosphere was decidedly non-academic. Participants were brought shoulder to shoulder with an exhilarating diversity of colleagues to take stock of their own capacities and to probe their calling. It was a supportive yet challenging environment, one in which the diplomatic profession was confirmed in its critical role in the achievement of the new goals of internationalism, at the same time as the human heart was raised up in a profession traditionally perceived as bloodless.

Conference alumni often kept in touch as they moved from posting to posting, assisted by the regular publication of a "Conference Directory" that was distributed among participants with updates of current assignments and addresses. Alumni formed groups that met regularly in Rome, Geneva, Paris and London. In London, Quaker Peace and Service established a lecture and discussion luncheon series to serve the local alumni group, and later to include a wider circle from the London diplomatic community. The London Diplomats Lunches continued until the mid-1990s.

Funding

The program attracted funding during its first decades, and partnerships as appropriate, from many individuals and foundations, including some of the big players. The Ford Foundation was an early and loyal donor, money that Friends liked to combine with grants from smaller donors, such as the General Service Foundation in Colorado, to keep their sense of ownership clear. The Carnegie Endowment for Peace also gave support and, as with Ford, was occasionally invited to send participants. Carnegie shared Friends' interest in assisting the newly independent States, particularly from Africa, to help bring new members up to speed with their UN representation. In 1962 the Carnegie Endowment organized courses for African diplomats-in-training, with a program for English speakers in New York and for francophones in Geneva. The final stage of the program in Geneva was for the trainees to attend the Quaker Clarens conferences that year, giving those meetings an exceptionally large African element and topical focus, something Friends had been working for years to achieve. These "trainees" were already admirably accomplished and talented young officers. Duncan and Katharine Wood recount having invited this group over to Quaker House in Geneva for a dinner later in the autumn, so that they could be introduced to representatives of some of the

most active international non-governmental organizations. In the course of the evening a telephone call came for one of the trainees, ordering him to return home as he had been appointed minister for foreign affairs. The MacArthur Foundation also gave significant support.

While the Quaker service agencies of the USA, Canada, and Britain and Ireland provided core funding for the ConSem Program for Diplomats throughout its history, and continue to do so through the QUNO and QIAR programs, another cornerstone has been the Quaker funds and trusts: primarily the Shoemaker, Chace and Thomas funds in the USA, and the Cadbury and Rowntree trusts in the UK. These sources, and from time to time individual Friends, have contributed significant seed money for Diplomats Conferences, and this has provided important partnership to mark the independence of the program from the ownership of larger donors. Swedish Friends contributed substantially from their own resources to QUNO's conferences on security and cooperation in Europe in the early '90s, and were also able to leverage funding from the Swedish National Peace Lottery through the Swedish foreign ministry.

The solicitation of conference funding from participating governments became significant in the mid-1980s for Peter Herby's high-level conferences on disarmament issues, and continues to be a major source of conference funding today. In general, those approached and contributing have been the group of "like-minded" countries, a term referring to the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, along with Canada and Australia, depending on their governments. In international affairs, these countries identified themselves as "like-minded" in the sense of supporting progressive policies of economic development, global security, and the rule of law. During the 1990s, on issues of UN reform and for the preparation of major UN conferences, Germany, the UK and the USA also contributed, as members of a wider group of countries helping to make up the conference budgets. The rules-of-thumb for the QUNOs have been to spread the support over numerous donors, keep the supporters anonymous (except to each other), and vary the mix over time. A variation on this form of funding has been for governments to contribute to the budgets of the UN secretariat appointed to service negotiations on particular issues (e.g., the protection of forests), and for the secretariat to invite a Quaker UN Office to do the organizing of informal and off-the-record meetings with some of these funds, to assist the negotiations.

A Changing Diplomatic Agenda

In the 1970s both the organizational culture within Quaker service agencies and the diplomatic world of the conference participants were undergoing rapid change. By 1978 the original Conferences and Seminars for Diplomats Program had been laid down, a move which AFSC had suggested already in 1974 but which Friends Service Council (soon to become Quaker Peace and Service, Britain) delayed through mid-decade. A younger, more radical and less traditionally Quaker vision of the world and of the political role of a Quaker agency had gained weight in AFSC, fueled by associations made through the civil rights, anti-Vietnam war, and feminist movements. In the new view, a program exclusively for diplomats smacked of elitism, both in terms of the issues being addressed (they found radical social change nowhere on the Conference agendas) and of the participants. Sylvain Minault, arriving in Geneva to take over the program in 1972, following on four years of work on public health in Algeria, was soon met with the alternatives being debated: close the Geneva Conference program down or move it to the Middle East where it might

serve a more defensible political purpose. Having not been taken into the debate, British Friends held fast with their support for the Geneva-based program, as did the Canadian Friends Service Committee, so the Conferences for Diplomats there were given a continuation on short lease.

But Sylvain was on watch for a new handle, to reach closer accord with the concerns of the Philadelphia committees and more directly address leading issues for the changing diplomatic scene. A period of détente in the Cold War was being ushered in with the recognition of East Germany and, in the wake of significant treaties for the eventual control of nuclear weapons (ABM), had shifted and to some degree upgraded the focus of international relations. After three decades, through the post-war, post-colonial expansion of international economic and cultural exchange, the question for the diplomatic profession was no longer the existential "what is the meaning of multilateral diplomacy." There was rather an increasingly wide range of topics being brought to the international agenda, from trade to international equity in global resource sharing (in 1974 food and petroleum shared top billing), to the entirely new challenge of cooperating in global environmental protection (the first UN conference on the environment was held in Stockholm in 1972). Diplomats' interests in the multilateral sphere now comprised a staggering span of issues on which they were called to develop expertise and positions for their governments.

The themes of the Quaker conferences and seminars were already being sharpened in the late sixties and early seventies, but from now on the relevance of conference topics was the primary measure of how diplomats judged the value of their time spent there. Sylvain Minault, interested in highlighting the developing world's problems, organized his first conference in 1973 on the topic of "The East-West Conflict and the Third World", at Lake Balaton in Hungary, with Lord Caradon, the widely experienced British diplomat and international conflict mediator, as the chair. In retrospect, Sylvain writes that although they had lively discussions on the topic, with capable representation from the Third World holding up their end, he had a feeling that the subject was a bit too broad and old-hat to fully engage participants.

With these thoughts, and pondering how to apply diminishing funding for the program (which would require, for one thing, drawing participants chiefly from the pool already in Geneva instead of bringing them from capitals or elsewhere), Sylvain began sitting in as an observer to the Geneva sessions of the Law of the Sea negotiations. Launched in late 1960's, the LOS had gained momentum in the 1972 Stockholm World Conference on the Environment, the first of the major theme conferences that would address critical international concerns over the decade. In these negotiations for a Law of the Sea treaty Sylvain saw the concept for his next conference. It turned out to be a resounding success, meeting essentially all of the new criteria for a more focused, Geneva-centered, lower-cost, and more mediation-toned gathering. And it initiated a form that was to outlive the original Conferences Program to become a mainstay of activity for the Quaker UN Offices and regional Quaker International Affairs Representatives into the present.

Sylvain's model was to invite experts and delegates who were engaged in specific issues of negotiations and to use the conference as an off-site preparation for upcoming phases of formal talks being held at the UN. In this format, topics for the agenda can be identified in pre-conference interviews, determining those most suitable and helpful to support progress between the parties. A French marine expert of Jewish extraction helped Sylvain to identify the focus for the first of this type of meeting: "Pollution Control in the Mediterranean." The Mediterranean, a semi-enclosed sea, was one of the most polluted bodies of water in the world and posed serious health hazards for all of the coastal States. While collective action was

required to address the problem, as the French expert explained to Sylvain, the Middle East conflict had precluded so far any effective measures. Circulating among the delegates, Sylvain was able to identify a list of potential participants, including Arabs and Israelis, as well as experts from around the Mediterranean to serve as speakers and discussion leaders. There was some skepticism within the Friends agencies to centering a conference on so "technical" a topic, whereas the tradition was to cultivate more "social" values, but the mix of topicality with the bridging of regional political and pragmatic issues provided a powerful clutch to engage the participants.

Already in 1952 Harold Snyder had written, "This program has much more political connotation than Friends are accustomed to. It is not an innovation for the Service Committee to approach foreign governments, for that is a familiar aspect of the foreign relief and rehabilitation work. But this is the first time the Service Committee has ventured to assist governments in the performance of their functions." Seen in this light, the turning of the Quaker Conferences for Diplomats to more technical issues beginning in the mid-'70s was less an innovation than a recalibration to the current tempo and knots of international negotiations. Duncan Wood writes of Sylvain's conference model: "Delegates to so long a conference (the Law of the Sea took almost ten years of negotiations), dealing with the minutiae of a very complex problem, may well reach the point when they cannot see the sea for the waves. Sylvain offered them a fresh perspective by inviting them to discard for a short while their status as delegates and to meet away from the Palais des Nations -at a site in the Geneva countryside- along with independent, non-governmental people, often academics, who had been studying the whole question unhampered by the instructions of a foreign ministry. There were Friends on both sides of the Atlantic among these academic experts" (from private correspondence).

After several years of supporting the Law of the Sea negotiations, Sylvain Minault made good use of the last years of the program in Geneva by bringing the increasingly important field of trade and development into the conference format. This began when the Quaker program was contacted by a high official of UNCTAD, the UN Conference on Trade and Development that serves developing countries as a secretariat, statistical bureau, and advisor, much as the OECD does for industrialized countries. The Quakers were asked whether they could assist in preparing Western media and policy experts for the fourth Trade and Development Conference (held every four years since 1964) coming up in Nairobi in May of 1976.

Here was an interesting angle, if somewhat problematic. While it was clear to Sylvain and his committee that the effectiveness of trade talks could be improved by raising the understanding of Third World problems and positions among opinion makers in the West, it was a potentially slippery slope to promote someone else's agenda through Friends good offices. After discussion it was agreed to go along with the project on the stipulations that the Program would accept no government's money for these activities, and that the subjects of the meetings and the choice of participants would rest entirely with the Quakers. On this basis a series of four short conferences was held at locations in and around Geneva, looking at the development benefits of outright aid versus improving the terms of trade for developing countries' commodities, among other issues. Over this period the Quaker UN Office gradually became an information center with a respected degree of expertise on these topics.

Follow On by QUNOs and QIARs

While the Quaker UN Office in Geneva had given support and continuity to the independent Conferences and Seminars for Diplomats Program since the start at

Clarens, QUNO-New York came increasingly to take responsibility for the Minister-Counsellor and other seminars for diplomats on the American side. By 1972 the QUNO New York Committee's minutes show them reviewing plans for the "annual Mohonk," referring to the lodge two hours north of New York where these meetings have continued to be held. The topic of QUNO's Mohonk conference in 1970 was "Mechanisms and Support for the Peaceful Settlement of Disputes," and in 1971 it was "Representation of China in International Institutions." Barry Hollister told an anecdote of the 1971 effort, when he was QUNO's New York director. On Monday after the weekend Mohonk meeting on China, Barry was called in on the carpet by the US ambassador, George H. W. Bush, and asked to answer "…why no one was invited from the USA to Mohonk?" Barry had to explain that in discussions with US representatives there and abroad, Quakers had only heard that Chinese representation was not an issue they wished to discuss informally and would prefer that others did not either. QUNO had been led to conclude that they couldn't find a useful participant from the USA for the Mohonk meeting. "Drat", said Ambassador Bush, "we are so out of touch and without instructions on how we can engage others on this issue, we are going to get trimmed in this General Assembly vote." And right he was.

Helping smaller countries to keep pace in multilateral negotiations was a recurrent objective for the Mohonk meetings, a theme that stretches through this whole history. Combining this function with the evolving model toward preparing participants for upcoming negotiations, in 1977 QUNO-New York set about helping smaller developing countries to prepare for the 1978 landmark First Special Session on Disarmament (SSDI). This was the international conference that would virtually set the agenda for disarmament negotiations for the next twenty years. One of the strengths of the Final Document of SSDI is the general acceptance and initial mapping of a "step-by-step approach" based on priorities, linkages and, not least, the need for participation of all members of the international community of States, large and small, in disarmament forums. Disarmament in the 1970s was not on the agenda for many of the smaller nations. With support from the Ford Foundation, QUNO hired an additional staff member (Lyle Tatum) and engaged Friends' international network to take up the issue of the Special Session in capitals in those countries whose regional leadership could help to balance big power politics, and to help identify contacts and potential participants. It always helps to sharpen a busy diplomat's attention if an interest in the Quakers' invitation is expressed from the home ministry.

QUNO-New York held a series of awareness-raising luncheons for smaller countries on the subject of "Preparing for SSDI" (the First UN Special Session on Disarmament) at Quaker House near UN Headquarters through 1977 and early '78. The usual pattern for QH luncheons is to use the 1:00 to 3:00 pm pause between UN meetings, provide a simple buffet lunch, have a lead-off speaker prepared to give a brief overview of the subject over the coffee, and then clerk a discussion to search out and examine salient points. In this case, the participants from the luncheon series were then hosted at a Mohonk conference over a long weekend as the Special Session drew near. Gordon Browne, who had worked at QUNO in the early 1970s and was called back to help with this meeting, writes vividly of the lively weekend. This Mohonk conference was addressed and led in discussion by, among others, Charlie Clemens, the Vietnam War pilot turned pacifist MD, along with Swedish and Canadian colonels, both of whom had led UN peace-keeping forces. There was also a "splendid and provocative" address by Kenneth Boulding, respected economist and Quaker peace activist. Plenary sessions had been broken with small group discussions from which critical points had been brought back to help the group distill the debate. In the final plenary session on Sunday at Mohonk, a report on the group's

proposals and positions on disarmament was presented, edited, and approved in a spirit of accomplishment and purpose. Later, while Gordon was observing the closing session of the SSDI where the final document was being adopted, a participant from the Mohonk conference left the floor of the General Assembly chamber to bring the draft document up to Gordon in the visitors' gallery. "You see that paragraph," he told Gordon, "that comes straight from Mohonk!"

By the time the AFSC withdrew funding from the Conferences and Seminars for Diplomats Program in 1976, the functions that the ConSem Program had provided were already being absorbed into the work of the QUNOs and, with wider reach, by the regional Quaker International Affairs Representatives (QIARs).

Where regional QIARs were stationed around the globe -in Asia first and then in Africa, the Middle East, and Central America- the "Quaker conference" model was being regularly employed as a program tool. The Meachams in Southeast Asia, and the Quinn-Judges and others who followed them, were organizing conferences in the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, bringing together diplomats and officials from the international sphere with community organizers, policy makers, and media representatives from the region, to focus on cross-cutting issues of regional integration, development, and peace.

By the beginning of the 1980s the transition was complete. The ConSem Program for Diplomats was dissolved but had bequeathed a style and methodology, and not least a reputation for Friends as able and acceptable organizers of sensitive meetings. As this brief history cannot do justice to the important work of so many QIAR programs over the last two decades of the 20th century, and as this period is still so fresh as to warrant particular discretion, that story awaits another telling. To underline the gravity of the issues with which QIARs have been entrusted, let one example suffice. The QIAR working in El Salvador during the terrible civil/regional wars of the 1980s applied her listening skills around an increasingly inclusive circle until she was able to organize and convene an off-the-record national forum which met regularly and came to include labor, military, government, opposition leaders and business interests. Their chief topic was what a post-war El Salvador might look like, with everyone's interests taken into account. At the close of the war, the Quaker representative was hired to continue to serve as secretary and convener of the now institutionalized civic forum.

Many more examples exist of significant contributions from QIAR programs, which at the start of the 21st century included representatives in southern and central Africa, in northeast and southeast Asia, in the Middle East, in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus, in Central America and the Andes. In 1993 Edward Reed, then associate program secretary in AFSC's International Division, wrote a short paper for QIARs called "What is a Quaker Conference?" that succinctly summarizes the method and approach for use of this mechanism in the field, attached here as an appendix.

At the QUNOs, diplomats and UN staff regularly contact the Offices to suggest issues on which the Quakers might helpfully provide off-the-record meetings to "pre-negotiate" tough issues arising on the agenda of the world body. Two- to four-day residential conferences are used in concert with off-the-record luncheon discussions (and teas and breakfasts) held at the Quaker Houses near the UN headquarters in Geneva and New York. The luncheon format is useful where the shorter timeline and compressed agenda can quickly pick up an issue and give it a preliminary hearing. The groundwork for both these types of meetings is the day-to-day contacts in and around the UN and in the mission offices of Member Governments, where the Quaker representatives do their listening, circulating to gather views and identify the critical issues where QUNO might provide meetings to advance understanding and agreement.

It should be noted that not all areas of the QUNOs' work lend themselves in the same way to treatment in residential conferences. Human rights issues, the amelioration of violent conflicts, attention to refugee needs are all topics on which QUNO has made substantial contributions since the late 1940s, mostly without full blown conferences. In many sensitive areas it has been more useful to focus timely attention on a limited topic, employing the luncheon framework for smaller groups for whom Friends can provide neutral space for highly confidential conversations.

Recent Application of the Model

Though much of the work of the Quaker United Nations Offices is left out of this report, a larger story to be told elsewhere, it might serve to include here some examples of the use of the Quaker conference for diplomats model in recent decades.

Peter Herby, who served as Associate Representative on disarmament issues at QUNO Geneva from 1984-'93, developed conferencing to a fine craft and made considerable contributions in several areas of disarmament negotiations during this critical period. Beginning in 1985 and carrying right through the completion of the ground-breaking Convention on the Elimination of Chemical Weapons (CWC) and its preparation for ratification and implementation in 1993, QUNO played an unparalleled role for a non-governmental body, with Peter's ability to track with the negotiators their progress and the knots arising which could be massaged and sometimes loosened in the regular series of weekend conferences that he arranged. Such conferences also helped prepare negotiators for the review of the Biological Weapons Convention in 1991, for work on strengthening agreements on weapons in outer space, and towards a nuclear test ban treaty in the 1990s. Though not directly under UN auspices, another significant area of negotiations addressed by QUNO in this period was the East/West talks that became the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, a process which began with the 1975 Helsinki East-West pact on human rights and security and in time brought about the fall of the Berlin wall. In a return to Paul Johnson's example from the 1960s, Peter took the conferences out where the negotiations needed them, which in the years from 1984-'86 was around Stockholm, and later in Vienna. Duncan Wood remembers sitting next to the American ambassador leading the US delegation at the Stockholm talks as Peter explained the purposes for the planned Quaker conferences to a select group of delegates. The American leaned over to Duncan and said, "You mustn't imagine that we don't talk to one another." Though the US ambassador's participation in the initial Quaker conference was at first reserved, he gradually warmed to the format and engaged his Soviet colleague and others very actively. At the end of the conference he came back to Duncan and said, "Thank you very much. That was different!"

The success of these series of conferences suggests that there is an added increment of return on efforts invested in a given topic over time, as the QUNOs can do. Another innovation developed for negotiation-oriented seminars for diplomats in recent decades is the writing of a summary report of the discussions. As an *aide-mémoire*, a report can review the questions asked, the positions espoused, the major proposals and conundrums identified, and still respect the confidentiality of individuals in the meetings, avoiding names and attributions. Quaker staff can only write this kind of report if it is requested and approved by participants, a question that needs to be asked in the closing session. A report from an off-the-record meeting needs to be acceptable to the large majority of those present (aware that there may be some who would prefer not to have the report if they felt their positions did not "do

well", but might not want to say so). It needs to be labeled "confidential" and circulated only to the participants list. But participants may make good use of conference reports within their own circles, and give the Quaker conferences deeper resonation as their results are shared within the UN missions and the foreign ministries.

Most participating diplomats are glad enough not to have to write a full report on their own, but the *aide-mémoire* can have a more important significance if it communicates where the general consensus can be found, and the openings for agreement and significant action that were identified. In a recent example, after a fertile and companionable weekend colloquium on UN reform in 1996 (when the non-payment of US dues to the UN was an outstanding issue), a very capable and sympathetic US ambassador who had participated with full candor in the meeting called the Quaker UN Office on Wednesday and asked where the report was -how did we expect him to make any headway in Washington if he couldn't indicate the level of frustration and agreement expressed by the rest of the international community, allies and opponents alike? Something that we could say much easier than himself.

During this writer's term at QUNO in New York, from 1986 to 1998, we arranged seventeen conferences for diplomats on topics which leant themselves to the Quaker conference format. These were chiefly of two types. The first was in preparation for the series of United Nations conferences in the 1990s on major economic and social topics (human rights, environment, population, women and social development) that followed the end of the Cold War. The second major field was reform and revitalization of the United Nations itself, a perennial topic both for the United Nations and for QUNO, but one that also gained considerable momentum in the 1990s.

The UN conferences on social issues in the 1990s reflected an exciting new agenda following the decades when basic human concerns had been shrouded by the Cold War, an idea that politics should serve life, not the other way around. Led off by the Summit for Children in 1990, there followed the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development, known as UNCED or the Earth Summit; the 1993 International Conference on Human Rights; the 1994 Population Conference; the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women; and the 1996 World Summit on Social Development. Governments found that they could now usefully examine and discuss a variety of issues in the social and economic sphere that had been occluded by the Cold War specter of "threats to national security". Real security began to be redefined and the differences between national and global interests to diminish.

In this sudden, welcome turn to global issues in the United Nations, QUNO New York concentrated on the environment and on women's issues. The QUNO Geneva office, working around the major UN human rights bodies that meet in Geneva, took the lead on the Summit for Children and the Human Rights Conference.

The New York office hosted five "Quaker colloquia" for top negotiators preparing for the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. The colloquia came to play a semi-official part in conference preparations, held the weekend prior to the start of each major round through the three years of negotiations preparing the UNCED agreements. Beginning on a Friday with an update on the status of background documents prepared by the Secretariat, continuing with the sharing of regional perspectives and the testing of positions and concerns, and closing at midday Sunday after summaries, if no conclusions. By the end of the weekend, a shared idea of how best to use the time in the coming negotiations and how to tackle some of the difficult questions could be taken back to get delegations off on the right foot.

Once the Quaker UN Office was on the environmental track, and with the usefulness of colloquia in the UNCED process widely recognized among

governments and UN staff, QUNO was asked to organize a colloquium prior to the final round of negotiations in completing the Convention on Biodiversity, in May of 1992 in Nairobi. And following the Earth Summit, a series of colloquia were organized around the follow-up negotiations for a Convention to Combat Desertification, and the negotiations begun in 1996 on the protection of forests.

QUNO filled a similar role in helping UN delegates and secretariat to prepare for the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing. There was a time close to the Women's Conference when the final chapter of the Beijing agreement -the chapter on implementation measures- was referred to within the inner circle of diplomats negotiating these documents as the "Mohonk chapter". And following the Beijing Conference, QUNO was asked to hold a follow-up meeting at Mohonk to help work out mechanisms for implementation of the conference agreements.

On the theme of UN reform, both overall organizational reform and on the specific question of updating the structure and rules of the Security Council, QUNO hosted colloquia from the mid- to late-nineties for an agreed "ambassadors only" level of participants. The issues were seen to be so sensitive that they could only be dealt with at the highest political level, and ambassadors would only speak candidly among peers.

At QUNO Geneva, with the creation of the World Trade Organization in the mid-1990s, the regularization of world trade talks and the challenges faced by the ILO, UNCTAD and other institutions in the UN system opened a rich vein for Quaker conferences for diplomats. Under the experienced hand of Brewster Grace, who earlier served as QIAR in both Asia and the Middle East, QUNO made significant contributions on the contentious issues of trade and labor, trade and the environment, and the complex but central questions of intellectual property rights (involving, *inter alia*, patents, the rights of indigenous peoples, and the ownership and use of genetic resources). Brewster's use of the conference model particularly points up what characterizes much of the QUNOs' work. That is, while the Quaker role is one of honest broker, provider of confidential space, and even-handedness, the Quaker position is not neutral. This is not lobbying, though that is something the QUNOs also do as issues require, comparable to the witness practiced by Friends elsewhere with their national and local governments. But in the organizing of issue-focused meetings for diplomats today, Friends' concerns can weigh in heavily by the topics chosen, the timing, the list of participants, and the way the program of discussion and resource persons are employed. In all these ways, Friends contribute to determining which issues are given focus, how issues are prioritized and seen to relate to each other, and to the general understanding of ways of approaching and ameliorating problems.

Conclusion

Of course, Friends are far from being alone today in the business of organizing seminars and conferences for diplomats and other decision makers. Many other actors have entered this field. What was a bright opening for invitees in the 1950s and '60s could be perceived, in our time, as one more distraction to clever diplomats in high demand for the many conferences, seminars and workshops offered by institutes, foundations, universities and non-governmental organizations. In this, as in other areas of peace, civil rights and global stewardship, Friends positions and approaches have moved from the margin toward the center, drawing nearer to the norm, or the norm drawing nearer to Friends. Is there still distinctiveness in the Quaker-style meeting? Is there a demand for them? The two questions are strongly

linked, in that a competitive field requires a clear added value in an invitation from Quakers. Those distinctive features still largely reflect the original strengths, and there are few in the field with this package of qualities that makes for a good Quaker conference: off-the-record; scripted as a collaborative arrangement and the culmination of consultation (and often smaller meetings) over time; in-depth familiarity with the subject matter and its challenges; related to a vision, commitment and wider integrated approach in international affairs; and addressing the needs of the participants rather than an outside agenda.

Quaker conferences for diplomats -and numerous points where the model can be applied for negotiators at other levels of politics- are as relevant in the 21st century as they proved fifty years ago, a flexible and durable tool for building understanding and consensus for peace and justice.

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Endnotes

1. Over twenty years later, the Paris Center served a similar supportive function for negotiators of the Genocide Convention. And in 1948, on the evening when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had finally been adopted by its drafting committee meeting in Paris, Eleanor Roosevelt dropped by the Friends Center to celebrate and to thank Friends for the support their international affairs work had given to making the Declaration possible.
2. Gunnar Jahn, chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Peace Prize committee (also at this time director of the Bank of Norway), closed his presentation speech on December 10, 1947 by saying:

   > "The Quakers have shown us that it is possible to translate into action what lies deep in the hearts of many: compassion for others and the desire to help them –that rich expression of the sympathy between all men, regardless of nationality or race, which, transformed into deeds, must form the basis for lasting peace. For this reason alone the Quakers deserve to receive the Nobel Peace Prize today.
   >
   > But they have given us something more: they have shown us the strength to be derived from faith in the victory of the spirit over force. And this brings to mind two verses from one of Arnulf Øverland's poems which helped so many of us during the war. I know of no better salute:
   >
   > *The unarmed only / can draw on sources eternal. / The spirit alone gives victory."*

3. "A large student club which met regularly in the Vienna Center represented all religious and political persuasions –Jewish, Protestant, Catholic; and Christian Socialist, Social Democrat, and German Nationalist. This did not seem especially noteworthy until one learned how intense were the antagonisms being bridged. I was told that nowhere else in Vienna could such a fellowship develop." From Clarence Pickett's autobiography, *For More than Bread*, p.90

4. See Howard Wriggens, Picking up the Pieces from Portugal to Palestine: Quaker Refugee Relief in World War II and After, 2004

5. Barry Hollister, attached to AFSC at that time, and Gilbert White remember reading a draft of Harold Snyder's history of the Washington Seminars, now lost. Barry reported that the chairing of the seminars was shared among upper-level staff and committee members from AFSC (Gilbert White had moved on to the presidency of Haverford College), including Gilbert, Barry himself and Stephen Cary. Also that the staff director of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was a regular attender.

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Appendix

What Is a "Quaker Conference"?

A background paper for staff working in Quaker international affairs programs

written by Ed Reed, August, 1993
for American Friends Service Committee International Division

International programs of the American Friends Service Committee from time to time sponsor conferences, seminars, consultations and other types of international meetings when these contribute to broader program aims. Until recently most such meetings have grown out of international affairs programs (the regional Quaker International Affairs Representatives and the Quaker U.N. Office programs) which usually involve some element of reconciliation. Today many AFSC international service or development assistance programs also organize or facilitate international meetings, frequently with the aim of enabling greater interaction and mutual learning among local non-governmental and popular organizations in a region or country. The ID Dialogue and Exchange Program has made it possible for international meetings to become one of the possible tools available to all AFSC international programs.

The international conferences sponsored by AFSC are for a broad range of purposes and participants, ranging from diplomats negotiating an international convention to women leaders discussing how to set up crisis services, from editors and journalists comparing perspectives on their role in society to an off-the-record consultation among representatives of parties in conflict.

What, if anything, is or should be distinctive about these international meetings or conferences organized by AFSC? Are there general characteristics that should apply to all international meetings that AFSC sponsors today? How are Quaker values such as respect for the worth of all human beings and commitment to non-violent resolution of conflict reflected in the way AFSC meetings are organized and conducted? This short paper, drawn from experience, aims to provide some guidance to AFSC staff faced with organizing an AFSC international conference.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. An AFSC international conference is not an isolated event, but develops as part of a larger program process that begins long before the meeting itself and continues on after its close. This process begins with a period of visiting with and listening to groups with which the program seeks to interact in order to learn their experiences, perspectives and concerns. The idea for a meeting of some kind may emerge as a way of *fostering* the shared goals of some of these groups, goals which are consonant with AFSC principles and the particular program mandate. Follow up after a conference is usually part of ongoing program concern for the issues and may also support the participants to carry through with their own plans to maintain contact with each other or initiate collaborative activities.

2. An implication of this process is that the role of AFSC staff in organizing a conference is usually to facilitate, strengthen or somehow further a concern identified by others in a region, rather than to introduce or promote consideration of issues that, while AFSC may deem them important, have not been heard or

tested among our contacts. However, the process is interactive, not one-way. AFSC staff may gently test their own ideas or echo ideas heard from other contacts in the region. Through careful listening they seek to identify themes, ideas or opportunities that are compatible with AFSC principles and the program goals and objectives. In the interest of promoting dialogue and change or reconciliation in difficult situations, AFSC programs have sometimes been in a position to venture into topic areas where others hold back and to move quickly when the time is ripe. Recent examples include the conference for emerging democratic voices in the Middle East, Persian Gulf, Eastern Europe and Central Asia; the consultation of key Islamic leaders from the Middle East and Southeast Asia; and the meeting of representatives of gay and lesbian organizations in South America.

3. When the extent of regional concern about an issue is not clear, or a program is exploring ways AFSC could contribute to regional dialogue, it is sometimes useful to organize a small consultative meeting of the most interested contacts to further develop an idea and perhaps advise AFSC. This group might then share with AFSC responsibility for planning, implementing and following up a conference. Or, they may simply be available as individuals to advise AFSC staff and possibly participate in meetings or activities that grow out of the consultation.

4. Promoting dialogue among representatives of diverse groups divided by politics, conflict, culture or ethnicity may be a primary aim of some conferences. However, even for those meetings which focus on a more immediate technical or organizational topic, Quaker conferences usually have this additional aim of fostering dialogue across barriers of one kind or another. This aim may be promoted by the mix of the participants, the setting of the meeting, the process of interaction, or other indirect means. Some meetings may be designed with the expectation that a diverse group brought together around a topic of common interest will be willing to discuss another, more delicate topic. For example, the East-West program is currently proposing to to bring Central European women together to talk about issues of women and work, but an ethnically mixed group of participants will be invited with the hope that they will also address the issue of ethnic diversity and conflict. Whenever promoting dialogue or reconciliation is an objective, effectiveness will be largely determined by the trust that all parties have in AFSC's integrity and nonpartisanship.

5. Quaker conferences are almost always invitational. Participants are selected by AFSC staff based on wide consultation prior to the meeting with an eye to both the immediate topic and the broader aim of fostering dialogue across barriers that may exist. Attention should always be given to incorporating gender diversity as well as ethnic, religious and class diversity when appropriate.

DESIGN OF A QUAKER CONFERENCE

Beyond the characteristics outlined above, which almost all AFSC/Quaker conferences share, the way in which meetings are designed and conducted differs according to the precise purpose of the meeting, the stage of development of the topic, and perhaps other considerations. For example, a meeting of environmental experts to work out a common program of action may involve more formal presentations and outputs than one aimed at promoting dialogue among antagonistic parties. Therefore, while it is difficult to

generalize about the best way to conduct all Quaker-sponsored conferences, the approaches outlined below have been found useful in many situations, especially those aimed at promoting greater understanding and dialogue among the participants.

1. **Residential Setting**
   Informal interaction among participants is facilitated when all participants remain on site for the duration of the meeting. The site chosen for a conference should encourage maximum contact and interaction among participants during and outside of formal sessions. A campus, study center or small hotel away from large urban areas have been found ideal. When appropriate, shared rooms with attention to good mixing, can facilitate interpersonal dialogue.

2. **Quaker Core**
   In order to foster an atmosphere and process that is respectful of all participants and that values the perspectives and contributions of all, especially when dialogue across barriers of some kind is aimed for, it has been found helpful to include several participants who are close to Quakers or AFSC and who understand the broader aims of a Quaker conference. They may have formal roles in the meeting process, as resource persons, moderators or recorders, or they may serve more as observers who interact with the participants informally and assist the AFSC staff person responsible.

3. **Steering Committee**
   At the start of the conference a steering committee is usually formed which meets daily to review and revise, if necessary, the program and monitor the sessions to ensure a positive meeting process. The steering committee should be composed of several participants representing important different perspectives or backgrounds, the AFSC staff person(s) responsible and perhaps another from the Quaker core. The steering committee should be responsible and give regular feedback to the conference plenary.

4. **Program/Agenda**
   It is common for Quaker conferences to be fairly loosely structured with a program that emphasizes open discussion more than formal presentations. While several participants or resource people may be asked to make presentations to introduce a topic, the focus is on stimulating thoughtful exchange among all the participants rather than on analysis of the presentor's position. The atmosphere aimed for is quite different from that of an academic seminar or the conventional international conference where most of the time is given over to panels of speakers.

   When a primary purpose of the meeting is learning from one another—perhaps about similar work in different settings—participants are frequently asked to share briefly information about their country and their work at one of the early sessions. To save time and enhance the sharing, it may be useful to request participants to prepare brief written descriptions which can be mailed out in advance of the conference.

   A tentative program should always be prepared in advance based on preliminary dialogue with likely participants. However, the tentative program should be subject to review and revision by the participants at the start of the conference

and should be reviewed by the steering committee as the meeting progresses.

5. **Moderator**

Experience varies widely on this issue. Should there be one moderator for the entire conference, or should this role be rotated among several people (perhaps those on the steering committee)? Should the moderator(s) come from the Quaker core, or be selected from among the invited participants? Perhaps when the meeting involves representatives of antagonistic parties and the primary purpose is to foster dialogue, there are advantages if the moderator is from outside any of the represented parties and has special skills found in the Quaker tradition. On the other hand, if AFSC's role is to enable a gathering of people who desire to dialogue with one another concerning their own agenda of issues (e.g., the Muslim consultation in Penang), the participants might better select moderators from among their ranks, with the AFSC/Quakers taking a less intrusive role. Finally, if the meeting is one of professionals focusing on a more technical topic, the moderator might be an expert resource person whom all can respect (who might also be a Quaker).

6. **Confidentiality**

As invitational gatherings to foster free-flowing dialogue, almost all Quaker conferences, are considered off-the-record to some extent. Meetings in highly sensitive political situations bringing together people who cannot meet openly have the strictest ground rules: the fact that the meeting happened will not be publicized and of course the names of the participants and what transpires is kept in strictest confidence. (Some recent meetings in Central America and the Middle East have been on this basis.)

A lower level of confidentiality may apply for conferences aimed at promoting dialogue on controversial or sensitive topics (e.g., disarmament treaties, religious perspectives, gay rights), but where there is no danger to the participants or where participants are eager to see the issues discussed in a wider circle. That the meeting has taken place and the names of the participants may be made available, along with a brief summary (or *aide-mémoire)* of the proceedings but without attribution of any specific remarks.

For conferences where there is little or no risk to the participants and the topics are not controversial (e.g., more technical topics), the participants themselves may set the ground rules for publicity. Frequently reports on such more open meetings are widely distributed by AFSC.

In all cases AFSC staff should keep detailed records of the conference for internal reporting purposes; for sensitive meetings these are filed under special procedures to ensure confidentiality. Summary reports of confidential meetings may be shared with major donors, but with the clear understanding that they are to be kept strictly confidential.

7. **Products/Outputs**

In general, Quaker conferences do not aim to produce concrete, immediate outputs, such as formal agreements or statements. They are usually part of a longer-term process where the impact may be observed in gradual changes of attitudes, openings to new perspectives, or influence on how people go about their work. In some cases a meeting may aim to move along a process of negotiation or planning and the output is more specifically along those lines. Or,

a plan for some specific action or joint work might emerge in an unplanned way from a meeting and AFSC might support implementation of the plan. The focus, however, is on the dynamics of personal interaction and a process open to the workings of spirit and serendipity, rather than on product or output.

8. **Evaluation**
   One role of a steering committee is to monitor the conference on a daily basis and to obtain feedback from the participants on how they feel about the process. As with any conference, it is important to schedule a plenary session on the last day to evaluate the meeting as a whole (strong points; weak points; how to improve next time), finalize the ground rules for confidentiality, and share ideas and make plans for follow-up activities. Staff should try to gauge the longer-term impact through contacts with the participants during later travel in the region.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps the distinctive element of a Quaker-sponsored gathering is the emphasis placed on fostering a certain quality of interaction and communication rather than on pushing for agreements or products. All of the above considerations --the care given to development of the concept, selection of the participants and design of the meeting-- have this as their ultimate aim. This quality of communication is one based on respect for the value of each participant's experience, perspective, contribution and individuality. It also reflects a Quaker faith that once we come to know, respect and value others as fellow human beings --with whom we may have profound differences-- a basis exists for working together to overcome divisions, solve problems or advance joint endeavors. A good Quaker conference is an occasion where the Spirit can move and the participants can respond.