

Preface

The pages that follow merit, in my view, both attentive study – and deep and widespread appreciation. Franck de Rouville of the remarkably successful “Pro Natura” group which has promoted Peace Parks to conserve nature by trans-border cooperation, recently pointed out the primacy of the seldom – identified role of the process of consultation. The mere fact that competent people of divergent opinions and backgrounds persist in the search for a consensus that is rigorously fair to all individuals and communities directly concerned, can be a harbinger of practical achievement. With common sense and a minimal dose of that increasingly rare commodity – optimism – could not the Middle East be on the verge of social and economic “take-off”?

The mid-April 2004 conference at Roger Williams University set exactly the right tone. As Dean Stephen White correctly informed us, “it is quite remarkable that Rhode Island is the first place on earth where religious liberty was written into its founding charter.” Dame Margaret Joan Anstee, OSMG, now retired after years of service as Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, herself embodies the spirit of perseverance mandated by the context: following her retirement, she managed to “stick it out” in what turned out to be an 18-month hazardous commitment as Head of the U.N. Peacekeeping Mission in Angola.* That she came to Bristol and participated actively in the deliberations helped establish the “sérieux” of the meeting! Noteworthy, too, was the presence of Timothy Rothermel, Special Representative in Jerusalem of the United Nations Development Program (UNDC) – for the past twenty-five years. Harold Frederiksen, a World Bank consultant on regional water resources was there, along with Suha Ozkan, who came from Geneva, where he is Secretary-General of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. From Japan we were honored to welcome Dr. Hiroshi Hori, a retired senior adviser to the UN. And more than sixty others – deserving of recognition – were also there, forming an influential and knowledgeable team from many countries.

That the project envisages a seaward thrust explains the contribution of Monsieur Lucien Deschamps, who as Secrétaire-Général of France’s “Prospective 2100” organized and led – ten years ago – the pathbreaking Conference on Artificial Islands, held in Monaco; in his lecture last April in Bristol, it was quite clear that this specialist “knew whereof he spoke”. If Palestinians and Israelis are soon to think very realistically of construction in the sea, they will wish to read about the physical history of Holland, more than sixty-percent of whose land is below sea-level! Perhaps the Dutch invention of a “dike army” was an early model for William James’s army

enlisted against nature as proposed in his 1910 essay, "The Moral Equivalent of War"? Of course Franklin D. Roosevelt's brilliant adaptation of James's idea – the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930's – was really an army enlisted to protect and conserve nature – but otherwise it was a faithful attempt to transpose the virtues of the military ethos into a framework where peacetime construction could provide an objective that commanded the willingness to volunteer and to endure hardships.**

On another level, "the process of consultation" launched by the Center for Macro Projects and Diplomacy may be regarded as an effort to improve what A. Lawrence Lowell called for in his historic chapter, "Foresight in Foreign Affairs".*** Clearly, if the "world community" does not assist the Israelis and Palestinians in "changing the context" which has hitherto prevailed in the Middle East, there could be a prolongation of a kind of warfare that is tragic but – equally – unnecessary and, let us be candid, counter-productive for both sides as well as for regional and international comity. To "change the behavior" which has now gone beyond reasonable bounds, one promising option is to change the physical context, and this suggestion is implicit in the "preliminary" project proposal. The kind of foresight discussed by President Lowell more than sixty years ago requires what would now be denoted a "systems engineering" approach, that is, an interdisciplinary and comprehensive examination of the situation and its dynamics and the delineation of a strategy for meeting the identified problems. Buckminster Fuller might have described the need for "a comprehensive anticipatory design science". Regardless of the preferred vocabulary, people of good will can begin to explore the problem together.

"The Preliminary Project Proposal" is not complex. It is to be hoped that its main tenets will not be turned aside on the assertion that they are "too simplistic". Reclaiming land – from sea and/or desert – is "obvious" – but on what Jay Forrester has dubbed "this tightly-coupled globe", "the obvious" is often overlooked. Because of the extra costs of land reclamation, both donors and investors will hesitate unless there are credible assurances of safety and security. On the other hand, governments may be forgiven for not wishing to underwrite what may appear as obligations of such high risk that they are politically unwise.

Perhaps the solution to the puzzle is a verifiable exchange of undertakings: the private sector (through individual or group pledges) can offer a stated amount of support subject to official agreements to maintain an even-handed and properly-enforced peace. And entities acceptable to the national and international authorities concerned can be appointed or, if need be, designed and incorporated, to receive tax-deductible gifts and to make the requisite investments.

To achieve this “consummation devoutly to be wished”, it may be useful to apply the World War II concept of “combined operations” to the somewhat different theatre of the quest for peace. A regional development plan that will yield an “even-normal water supply” and ample and reliable electric power will appropriately involve the participation of all nations in the region, including Syria and Lebanon. Many projects in addition to the steps discreetly proposed on these pages will be compatible and cordially welcomed, once the habitual choice between indifference and confrontation is replaced by a robust sense of the vast potential in a strategy of combined operations.

The Bristol Conference did not, it is admitted, seek a solution for the difficult and “incontournable” question of Jerusalem. However, a former member of the British Foreign Office, the Reverend David Kitching, has recently published a thoughtful analysis of this matter, and as the area of inquiry broadens and deepens, there will be contacts with other experienced people who have devoted time to the multitudinous facets which make up the “problématique” of the region. What the Center for Macro Projects and Diplomacy can already offer is an unbiased focal point for cooperative research, and an unswerving commitment to candor and public benefit. As George von Lengerke Meyer put it, a century ago, “Things alter for the worse spontaneously unless altered for the better designedly.”

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Notes and References

- * “Orphan of the Cold War: The Inside Story of the Collapse of the Angolan Peace Process by Margaret Joan Anstee, Macmillan Press Limited, London, 1996, ISBN-0-333-66445-0. See also her more recent autobiographical “Never Learn To Type: A Woman at the United Nations”, John Wiley & Sons, Limited, Chichester, U.K., 2003.
- ** “The Moral Equivalent of War” first appeared in *International Conciliation*, June 1910 and was reprinted as an appendix in “*American Youth: An Enforced Reconnaissance*”, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1940. The book’s Foreword was contributed by Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt.
- *** “Foresight in Foreign Affairs” was the introductory chapter in “*Before America Decides: Foresight in Foreign Affairs*”, Harvard University Press, 1938. At the time of publication, Mr. Lowell was President-Emeritus of Harvard University.