

Among Friends

No 96: Autumn 2004

Published by the Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation
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Dear Friends

I have just returned from a visit to Moscow: attending the Friends House Moscow Board, meeting with Friends from Moscow Monthly Meeting and taking part in a gathering for enquirers. Sadly there is little space in this overfull issue of Among Friends for much to be written about what for me was a full and inspiring week.

However I do just want to share with you briefly my impression of significant achievements by Friends House Moscow. They have been responsible for introducing and sustaining support for Alternatives to Violence Projects (AVP) in Moscow, Dzerzhinsk, Lipetsk and Ingushetia. Most recently AVP in Moscow has been working with soldiers to help lower the levels of bullying in the Russian army and plans are being developed to introduce AVP in prisons. Other work includes support of two centres for women suffering from domestic violence, several projects for children and seminars for conscientious objectors.

Moscow Monthly Meeting and Friends House are involved in outreach: the web-site with information and translations of Quaker works into Russian is increasingly significant in bringing serious enquiries from new seekers. Galina Orlova is retiring although



Russian soldiers in an AVP trust exercise

(as was minuted at the Board meeting): “The influence of her presence and service will continue to bless us for many years to come.” Sergei Grushko and Mark O’Neill will continue the work.

It is in great need of financial support and is dependent on the stalwart fundraising efforts of Board members from the USA and Europe. It really is sustained by small donations, collections in local meetings and sales of Christmas cards and Russian crafts. I would be very happy to send more information to any reader who feels they might be able to provide a donation or do some fundraising on behalf of FHM. There are AVP and other projects waiting for funds to come in before they can go ahead. Please see the back page of Among Friends for details of how you can contribute.

Bronwyn Harwood

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Epistle from Nordic Friends conference on Universalism, Oslo, September 2004.

To Friends Everywhere!

During a few days in September 2004 about 35 Friends from the Nordic countries have been gathered in Oslo, Norway, for a conference on Quaker universalism. Two challenges formed the basis of the conference: The first is the reality of globalisation which increasingly brings us into contact with persons of other faiths, and we need to learn how best to meet them. The other challenge is the increasing tension we perceive between different understandings of our own Quaker faith leading to a need for dialogue between Friends. An attempt to meet these challenges may entail both risk and opportunity. How shall we express the truth in which we live? Are there problems in handling our own Quaker plurality and the ways Friends use different vocabularies when we talk about our own faith. Are we able to live together without wanting to “convert” one another? With this conference we want to start a process to enter deeper into dialogue about these concerns.

The conference heard about the concept of universalism from several angles, and we have seen that there is more than one definition of universalism. Some of these definitions are based on the idea that “our faith is universal, suitable or relevant for everyone”. Other definitions indicate that universalism seeks to be as inclusive as possible, and at times this is done by avoiding certain vocabulary such as e.g. the Christian. At other times we see that truth and insight may emerge from many sources. Even within the major Nordic churches there are differences in the understanding of universalism.

We have seen that the faith of early Friends had universalist features while at the same time it was solidly anchored in a profound understanding of the Bible and expressed in Christian terms.

Each person has their own way of understanding and describing universalism. This does not simply refer to abstract definitions, but is a feature of the individual narrative, such as when Friends tell about their way into membership in the Society or about where they find inspiration. We need to listen to the individual narratives with devotion and respect. They express the faith experiences of others and may form a common ground for dialogue.

We had also invited lecturers from outside the Society. Kajsa Ahlstrand shared with us recent developments in Lutheran and Anglican churches in Nordic countries, in the Baltic countries, Great Britain and Ireland (in the Porvoo

Communion). She let us see their basis for dialogue. Lutheran and Anglican churches can show no other way to salvation than Jesus Christ, but neither are they able to define limits to the grace of God. At the same time these churches see that there is spirituality outside of the churches, at times without an explicit religious language. There is a wish for dialogue and for learning from others. The churches of the Porvoo Communion are aware that there is much they may have to change, and the way ahead may be long and difficult. We are glad that other churches increasingly look outward with openness and willingness to dialogue.

Halvor Moxness talked about contemporary research into the historical Jesus and its consequences for faith today. Theology resulting from this research points to aspects of Jesus which come into conflict with customary ideas of power relations regarding race, nationality, wealth and poverty, and gender. Through this research we may also clearly see that it is not western white men who are “the universal humans”. We may think the historical Jesus research gives undue emphasis to details, identifying Jesus with particular groups – the poor, Galileans, women – but it may be that only when we fully understand these particular traits, a real universalism may emerge! It may become easier for new groups to identify with Jesus on their own terms, and then Jesus may become truly universal.

We shape our faith in words, but the words also give shape to our faith. The language we choose will influence and direct how the faith is interpreted. Language may help us understand one another, but may also hinder true understanding. At times we find that language fails us. We see that we need to be very explicit in explaining ourselves and where we stand; we need to talk together about our faith, our assumptions and our choice of terms.

This conference opened to us a clearer understanding of the possibilities and challenges contained in Quaker plurality. We see that we are at the start of a dialogue which we want to embark upon. We need to have this dialogue with our own selves, within the Society of Friends, and outwards.

Oslo, the 26th day of the 9th month, 2004
Hans Eirik Aarek (sign.) Clerk, Norway Yearly Meeting
Erik Cleven (N), Karin Ern (S), Mogens Clausen (DK)
Conference Epistle Committee

Quaker Youth Pilgrimage Epistle

To All Friends Everywhere,

The 2004 Quaker Youth Pilgrimage took place between the 16th July and 13th August. It brought together young Friends between 16 and 18 years of age from Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the U.S.A. We were accompanied by four leaders, Ken and Pat from Virginia U.S.A. and Jane and Caroline from Britain. We all greatly enjoyed the cultural diversity within this group and the diversity of accents and vocabulary as well.

Starting in Birmingham, England with home stays and 4 days in Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, we traveled on to Yealand in Lancashire to see 1652 country and then to a retreat at Barmoor in Yorkshire. We then moved on to Ter Apel in the Eastern Netherlands via Hull and Amsterdam. From there we also visited Northern Germany.

During the four weeks we spent together, we followed George Fox's footsteps through Britain and the Netherlands, learning about Quaker History and important Quakers such as Margaret Fell along the way. While at Yealand we explored the roots of Quakerism and the persecution of early Friends through visits to Pendle Hill, Firbank Fell, Swarthmoor Hall, Lancaster Jail and a number of early Meeting Houses. In the Netherlands we learned about George Fox and William Penn's visits to several religious communities including the Mennonites, another historic peace church. We also learned about other religious groups when we had a talk on the Hajj pilgrimage at Woodbrooke and visited the Central Mosque in Birmingham and the synagogue at Bourtange in Holland. As well as learning about other faiths, we explored diversity within Quakerism and within our group with sessions on programmed worship, the Bible and our own spiritual experiences. We discussed the Quaker testimonies and our responsibilities and had several sessions on conflict resolution. We recognized the importance of Quaker values when we saw the horrors of persecution under the nazi regime and how it affected local communities.

Outside the sessions we discussed the themes and other issues in our free time and more formally in base groups. There was a feeling of openness within the group as a whole, which built confidence to share, discuss and challenge our beliefs. All of this helped our personal spiritual development allowing us to clarify, discover and

in some cases change our individual beliefs.

The programme was organised with busy and slower days to give us time to learn and reflect. We held meetings for Worship in many places including Pendle Hill and on the deck of the Ferry from Hull to Rotterdam. A wide range of Epilogues (Evening Worship) led by pilgrims closed each day and gave us time to reflect. During these epilogues we worshipped in many different ways, through silence, music, words, movement and hugs. The combination of learning, discussion, fun, and worship fostered a spirit of unity and peace within our group.

Over the course of the pilgrimage we all made 31 new friends and became incredibly close within such a short space of time. There was a nice mixture of work and play, music, hugging and deep conversations, spiritual and otherwise which all served to bring us closer together.

When you live in a community for a month, problems do arise. However, we worked through them together and business meetings with and without the leaders successfully resolved these issues, inspiring a greater spirit of co-operation and trust within the group. We also co-operated on more practical matters, such as cutting down trees and clearing undergrowth in a Quaker Burial ground for our work project. The whole pilgrimage allowed us to form lifelong friendships and strong ties with Quakers from both sides of the Atlantic and made us feel a stronger connection to the Worldwide Society of Friends.

We feel that this pilgrimage has accomplished its goals of bringing Quakers together and inspiring spiritual exploration. This will last beyond these four weeks as we continue our friendships and take our experiences on our inward and outward journeys. We are every grateful to all those who helped us along the way-the organising committee, the leaders, the speakers, the hosts and many other helpers.

This pilgrimage has been an incredible and unforgettable experience for us all, giving us countless memories of the people we met, the places we went, the conversations we had, and the love we share. It will affect our lives for years to come.

Signed on behalf of the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage by the Epistle Committee: *Edward Ullathorne, Rebecca Mattingley, W. Geoffrey Black, Anna Margaret Birkel, Meredith Shull, Max Nohe, Tamsin Baker.*

QYP visits The Netherlands and Germany.

This year the young pilgrims not only visited the well known 1652 country in England but also travelled through the Netherlands and Germany discovering stories of early Friends in these parts and visiting locations associated with some of the atrocities of the Second World War. The theme of persecution, resistance and liberation covered both aspects.

The young Friends started their journey much the same as George Fox and William Penn in their days: by boat from England to Rotterdam and travelling on to Amsterdam. At Amsterdam they were welcomed at the Quaker Centre and introduced to the history of Netherlands Yearly Meeting by our Friends Tjeerd Dibbits. Then they journeyed to the northern parts of the Netherlands where they were based at a village close to the German border. They visited the town of Harlingen where a small group of Dutch Friends visited the local Mennonite congregation in 1670 and caused quite a stir. After the service these Friends addressed the Mennonites of Harlingen telling them that in their view they “feigned their faith and asking them to convert to the “true faith”“. The Mennonite congregation was shocked beyond belief, threw the Quakers out and delivered them to the town authorities accusing them of breaking the peace! The result was that one of our Friends died in prison, another was condemned to forced labour and a third was denied further access to the province of Friesland! And all this on account of a meeting between two of the traditional “peace churches”!! The Quaker Youth Pilgrims were warmly welcomed by the present-day Mennonite congregation at Harlingen. The pastor, Kees Pilaar, gave a talk on the history of Mennonites who had originated in these parts a century earlier than Friends. Harlingen Mennonites told us they were pleased with the renewed visit of Quakers and apologized over the way in which they had treated the Quaker visitors in 1670. As for the Quakers, Kees Nieuwerth recounted that visit in the seventeenth century and felt that it was the Quakers that needed to apologize for the behaviour of our Friends towards a fellow peace-church. At this point the group was presented with a peace-pipe by the Mennonites, an old-fashioned Dutch clay pipe, to repair our severed relationship.

Eventually a flourishing Quaker community arose in Friesland, centered upon Harlingen.

The same trip also took us to an ancient church at Wiewerd not far from Harlingen. Here William Penn visited the community of the followers of the mystic and



Young Friends visiting the Central Mosque in Birmingham, England

church reformer Jean de Labadie, the so-called Labadites, in 1677. Penn and the leaders of the Labadites had a dialogue on their faith experience, about which Penn noted briefly that it had been fruitful. Here as well the renewed Quaker visit was much appreciated.

Another interesting visit was to the city of Emden in northern Germany. In the seventeenth century a small Quaker group had suffered from severe persecution by the city authorities dominated by Protestants. When news of this reached William Penn, whose visit in 1671 had led to the formation of the group, he wrote a passionate letter to the mayor and council of Emden. It called on the authorities to realize that they themselves had pleaded for freedom of religion with the Roman Catholics and pointed out that it was highly inappropriate for them now to persecute others who wished to have the same freedom to practice faith their way. The Youth Pilgrims were able to view this letter which is significant, not just for its contents, but particularly because—until today—copies of it have been kept at the city archives of Emden. It eventually led to an Edict of Tolerance by the city fathers of Emden granting Friends freedom of religion in that city in 1686.

The famous A Lasco Library at Emden was also visited. The collection held here is of major importance to the history of Protestantism in Europe and includes the personal library of Erasmus. The young Friends from North America in particular were impressed to find that the oldest print in this collection was one which dated back to 1493 (!!) and they were allowed to take pictures of its illustrations!

At Emden the group was invited to a tea reception given in honour of their visit by the Lord Mayor, who in his address also welcomed this present-day Quaker visit after William Penn's historic visits in the seventeenth century.

in these parts even uncovered information on the history of early Friends previously unknown to modern Friends, which shows that the visit by the QYP also contributed to the life and development of our Yearly Meetings.

All in all in preparing for this part of the pilgrimage Friends

Kees Nieuwerth

Baltic Friends Meeting 2004

End Statement of the Meeting of Baltic Friends 2004, held in Nida, Lithuania from September 17th - 20th 2004: a gathering of 39 Friends and Seekers from 13 countries in Europe. This document was drafted by the Russian speakers present and adopted by the gathering as its Epistle. The original text is therefore in Russian and a translation is below:

“Балтийская Встреча Друзей 2004” (Условия, Вызовы, Возможности) уникальна тем, что она позволила впервые друзьям из 6 стран Восточной Европы познакомиться друг с другом и получить возможность общения с Западными Друзьями. Учитывая особенности жизни Восточных Друзей, изоляцию (информационную и географическую), а также тот факт, что мы не обладаем достаточным опытом квакерской практики, например проведения деловых и молитвенных собраний, нам представилась возможность развития как нашего индивидуального так и совместного квакерского способа жизни. Мы ощутили духовную общность, единение в вере, сходство духовного поиска и замыслов вне зависимости от страны проживания. Все это позволило выработать дальнейшую стратегию такого сотрудничества (Восток-Запад), которое будет полезно квакерам как Восточной, так и Западной Европы.”

“Baltic Friends Meeting 2004 (Conditions, Challenges and Opportunities) was unique in the sense that it allowed Friends from 6 East European countries to meet with each other and to encounter Friends from Western Europe.

Given the conditions of life in Eastern Europe (geographically and in getting information), and also the fact that Eastern Friends do not have much experience of Quaker practice, for example in conducting Quaker

Meetings for Worship and business meetings, Eastern Friends had an opportunity to develop as individuals and as a community.

Regardless of the country we live in, we experienced spiritual unity, a sense of fellowship in faith, a common search for truth and aspiration for future action.

All this allowed us to work out a strategy of co-operation between East and West which will be useful and important for Friends from Eastern European countries as well as for Friends from the West.”

Nida, Lithuania, 19th September 2004



Pan y leche – a Spanish Quaker encounter

“Los Cuáqueros nos dieron pan y leche (The Quakers gave us bread and milk)”, was how Rosa Serra y Sala, a Catalan primary school teacher, introduced her talk. She explained how she heard this comment as she was completing another project on the history of schools in her town, Granollers, north of Barcelona. It was the first time she had heard of the Quakers and for some reason she continues to not fully understand, it has driven her to spend her free, and not-so-free, time in the last ten years researching into Quaker relief during the Spanish Civil war. Who were the Quakers, and why did they do what they did during the Spanish Civil War, putting themselves and their families at great risk? Rosa spoke to us at length both of the activity of these Quakers and of her own relationship to her discoveries. She felt great humility before what she saw as a giving that did not ask for anything back, a way of giving, she said, that still now, so many years later, Spanish and Catalan people spoke of with dignity, contrasting it to the humiliation that others still expressed when they spoke about having been helped by other bodies, who wanted something in return. Rosa’s inexhaustible efforts and passion will lead to a doctoral thesis; she said, however, that for her the privilege of being able to share her work with us, Quakers and attenders from Barcelona and other parts of Spain, was enough.

Rosa’s talk formed part of a weekend that the Barcelona Monthly Meeting had decided to hold for friends in Spain. We are in a time of transition; Nancy and Gerard Negelspach, who have sustained the Barcelona Meeting for almost forty years, were obliged to move out of the

home in which they had held Meeting for so long. At the moment we are meeting once a month in private homes, and finding our way forward. We held this weekend in a beautiful modernist retreat house in the countryside north of Barcelona, and very much enjoyed this chance to be together, to welcome visitors and inquirers and friends. Elizabeth Morris came to be with us as a Visiting Friend from EMES; she contributed in many ways and we hope to continue our relationship with her. In total there were thirteen of us. Over the weekend we held several Meetings for Worship, discussed what it means to be a Quaker, historically and now, spent a lovely and moving afternoon with Rosa as explained above, sang in Spanish, English and Catalan, and ended with a discussion of plans for the future. Several of the people who came had never been to a Quaker Meeting; others are seeking to further their knowledge of the Quakers, and said that they would be joining us in the future. Several people wished they had been able to make it; overall it was a rich time for us and we hope to repeat it next year, this time with the group of Friends in Madrid.

We plan to have a study weekend in Malaga at the beginning of the year, and to work on the website that has been started to give information about Quakerism in Spanish. At the same time we thought of creating a kind of inquirer’s pack in Spanish. If anyone is in Spain or thinking of visiting, please do get in touch at wilson@esade.edu.

Caroline Wilson

Barcelona Monthly Meeting November 2004

Border Meeting on “Prayer” in the Black Forest

Heidi Blocher of Switzerland initiated the idea of holding a Border Meeting, and Mike Zipser of France and Kerstin Mangels of Germany helped to organize it. The meeting took place on a weekend in June, in an old place of pilgrimage near the borders of Germany, France and Switzerland. The site is of extraordinary scenic beauty, on a hill overlooking large sections of the Black Forest and allowing a view deep into France. Friends from the three countries took part and for three days shared their views, insights and experiences about prayer.

The different cultural and national backgrounds of the

participants quickly lost their importance as soon as we approached the topic. From the very beginning it became clear that it was not an easy subject to talk about. For quite a few participants it had meant struggle, at least for some time of their lives. How can I talk to God? Does He demand my daily prayer? Does He care about my prayer, or does He listen at all? What is the right way to pray? As children, many of us were made to pray. What is our attitude now as adults?

At first we tried to find answers to the question: “What is my understanding of prayer?” One of the outcomes

of this session was the insight that prayer is a very individual thing, and that hence there is no right or wrong way to pray, that prayer can be a source of strength and an opening to the working of God in us and in the world. Therefore one of the main aspects of praying is not so much talking to God, but rather listening to God.

On the second day we met in small circles to share our personal experiences with prayer. In spite of all the varieties of approach to this contact with God we discovered some striking similarities in our personal histories of praying. Some participants had even discarded prayer for some period of their lives, only to rediscover it after or during a life crisis, in a much deeper way. But again, there are so many ways and reasons to pray - praying for help, praying to thank God, praying for someone in distress, silent prayer or

spoken prayer, prayer without words, a sung prayer, prayer in company or alone, prayer without a reason. All these forms of prayer are valid, as long as they are sincere and come out of your heart. For many of the participants the prayer Our Father had a special meaning, and it accompanied them through their lives. An 87-year-old member of our group even sang Our Father with her clear voice and moved us all. Maybe she made up the melody.

We parted, feeling enriched by all we had heard, said and experienced. We decided to make these border meetings a continuing tradition. In fact, we decided to hold two border meetings in 2005, one for families with their children in Switzerland, and one for "adults" with a chosen topic, again at the same place in the Black Forest in South West Germany.

Eckard Teichert, Freiburg

An Israeli conscientious objector Looks to the Future:

Together with the Israeli organization New Profile, the Jerusalem Quaker International Affairs (QIAR) Program is working to change the harsh reality that faces Israeli conscientious objectors (COs) and military resisters. Through a variety of projects, New Profile supports Israeli COs and military resisters, raises awareness about the dangers of militarism, and counters militarism in Israel.

Three years ago Rotem Mor refused to continue his military service after a year and a half in the army and spent time in an Israeli prison for it. Since his release Rotem has focused on working with youth, as well as in the movement against the apartheid wall. He now works as Programme Assistant to the AFSC's Quaker International Affairs representatives in Jerusalem.

Investing in our Youth as a Form of Effective Resistance

When looking to extend our effectiveness in the struggle for a new future free of oppression in Palestine/Israel we need to examine where our resources are and make full usage of them. We are very busy resisting occupation in many ways but forget sometimes to examine whether our resistance is at all effective and long lasting. Ineffective resistance is a bit like throwing rocks at a tank; it may make us feel good for a little

while, but is highly ineffective in any real sense. Effective resistance tackles not only the core of the issues which cause us suffering but also creates an alternative to our old ways.

So in looking to make a real impact we want to start looking at which groups are disempowered in society and ready to be empowered. One such group in Israeli society is our youth. The youth in Israel is a kind of "wasted" commodity. It is trained to produce the same catastrophic results that the previous generation created. Israel's youth are educated to be unquestionably patriotic, "achievement" oriented and consume with a passion. There is a real void in true substance in the lives of our young people leaving them feeling empty, bored, cheated and lacking any real hope, power or positive direction.

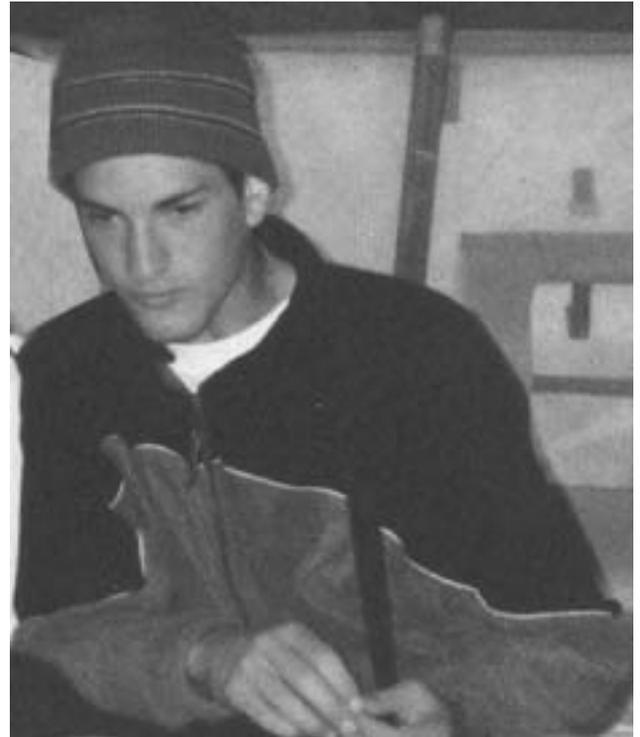
There is a system of disempowerment working 24/7 on our youth. It starts with consumer culture, probably the most destructive force in the world today, and prevalent in every part of Israeli society. The urge to consume, fueled by advertisement, media propaganda, social pressure and encompassed in almost every norm and value in our society sucks all substance out of life. It creates young people who are blind to the joys and agonies of others, living in an isolated world where everything around them, as well as they themselves,

are reduced to nothing more than merchandise to be dealt and acquired by those who can afford it. Consumerism leaves lives completely lacking substance; Zionist militarism fills that void by telling our youth that they can be important people by defending their country from the ever present enemy.

Militaristic education is everywhere in society. From Kindergarten plays where children play brave, heroic Israeli soldiers, to high school's mandatory preparation workshops, as well as billboards, commercials and dinner table discussions about who did what when they were in the army. Zionism provides the (very shaky) moral grounds on which this education grows. You are to be fighting for the survival of the Jewish people, it is your god given country and, anyways, we have no choice in the matter of war because it was forced on us by the savage Arabs. All this has an 18 year old very excited to be going to the army where he or she can give of herself to her people, fulfill his adult potential, and gain credentials as a "successful" Israeli civilian. Thus we have an education of violence, forcefulness and compliance officially sponsored by the state and embraced by much of its citizens. Our disempowered youth are completely reliant on the existing social order to provide them with some much sought after strength.

Thus, providing true substance and ample answers to young people's burning questions is a very high priority for us. There are a steadily growing number of young people who are questioning the "truths" manufactured to them by the army generals and corporate elite. A burning desire for truthful answers, real substance and respect drives much of our youth to splinter from societies' mainstream and seek alternatives. Often this finds its expression in drugs, violence and other destructive phenomenon. We can attribute much of this to the inability of people like us to offer an accessible alternative to our youth. Such alternatives, when practiced with commitment, passion and patience are hugely in demand. Every school I go to, on busses and in the streets I find young people who are asking questions and seeking answers and alternatives. Such is an immense strength that must be harnessed and empowered in order to create a new foundation for a just society.

In the past year I have had the privilege of guiding over fifty young people who were contemplating their army service through 2 day intensive seminars. Three seminars were held with the support of New Profile, the (feminist) movement to bring about a civil, as



Conscientious Objector Rotem Mor looks to the future in Israel

opposed to militaristic, society in Israel. The seminar's purpose is to provide much needed alternative education and community to those who seek it. It provides young people with deep, interesting and varied perspectives on issues regarding the conflict and Israeli society and allows them to contemplate them together in a safe and open environment.

The seminars are composed of about seven two to three hour sessions hosted by different people and addressing a variety of issues such as: the pros and cons of army service, the Israeli Occupation, the Nakba, militarization, martyrdom, feminism, Judeism, Zionism and many more. We had esteemed university professors such as Idith Zertal and Ilan Pape speak to us, we went on tours of Jaffa with the Arab Counsel of Jaffa, spoke to heads of pre army programs, religious figures, soldiers who had refused, as well as those are still enlisted and a host of others. We also incorporated other sorts of activities such as meditation, joint meals, games and free time at the beach.

The seminar places its young participants at its center. All activity is centered on their internal world. The idea is to reach them and touch them in new ways, to keep them involved and challenged. The seminar was built so that each view being presented would be confronted by another, letting no perspective, thought, or opinion go unchallenged. This process flooded and excited the participants, which made them eager to

share, to debate and express their doubts, dilemmas and newfound perspectives. We would hold much of our discussion in small groups which allowed us to discuss freely with each other, encouraging each and every one to express his or her self and allowing them the time and space to do so. This process would have every participant begin to form their own personal perspective; new and distinct from their former views, as well as give rise to collective thoughts and views.

The basis of our participation in the seminar was listening and active participation. It allowed us to form relationships of respect, cooperation, interest and curiosity with each other and with our special visitors. Every aspect of the seminars was geared to create new awareness, thought and participation: From the cooked vegan food to the joint planning and running of the seminar, the topics of discussion, the small discussion groups, the rules and regulations, meditation and games.

Thinking deeply about the participants and the results they can achieve had them feel safe and respected in the environment of the seminar. We were able to create a sense of freedom of expression and imagination that is so lacking in our ordinary lives. This left us open to one another and to new thoughts and ideas. We created a space where people wanted to be, and where they could be listened to and truly present. The seminar provided not only alternative content and discussion but also alternative ways of being within a group and as individuals. We did not just debate and discuss possible alternatives; we practiced and fulfilled them at the same time. This gave new strength and resonance to our words and elevated them beyond their everyday usage.

Such an experience had inspiring, and sometimes surprising results. No one who participated, including the guest speakers, came out the way they came in. We all got to be present to the strength we have as a group and as individuals. A good example was the conversation we had, on three separate occasions, with soldiers who came to speak at the seminar (the last conversation of the seminar was always with a soldier). They were amazing and unique conversations in their honesty and intensity. Twice we brought experienced officers, who have been in the army for a long time yet

on all occasions the soldiers transformed right before our eyes from their initial self assured position to a much more varied, attentive and contemplative way of being. It was truly something to be seen: how deeply a group of high school student, together for only two days, could touch these soldiers who had come to speak with them.

Some other real accomplishments of the seminar was the creation of a group of eight young men who are planning to refuse that formed out of the seminar experience, another was the many actions that were taken by participants such as organizing tours, seminars, graphite and other actions to educate and raise awareness amongst their peers. Many of the participants created quite a stir in their schools and communities' with their actions, showing what true bravery is: standing up for what you believe to be right even if it's a very unpopular thing to do. We also had some unexpected results like participants who reported that they had formed closer relationships with their disapproving parents following the seminar, a truly unique phenomenon. It all goes to show that when you provide young people with the information, tools, and space to make their own choices magical things will happen.

We are now working, along with many others, to create a mass movement of critical and creative young people. These will be the future leadership of our peoples, and require that we treat them as such. We are slowly building the foundations for a viable movement, able to address the needs of our society in the face of great adversity. The creation of such a movement requires the active participation of the entire movement for social justice in Palestine/Israel as well as the support of our friends from abroad. It will take much time, effort and commitment and will require that we go beyond what we have been able to achieve so far. Creating a worthy future for, and with, our young people is the ultimate challenge and it demands that we rise to it.

Rotem Mor rotemdanmor@disinfo.net Reprinted from *News From Within* August 2004

<http://www.geocities.com/rotemmor/>

<http://www.afsc.org/israel-palestine/>

Agreeing to Disagree – the WTO Process.

On the 31st July, the 147 Governments that make up the World Trade Organisation (WTO) reached agreement on an interim package that will keep global trade talks alive. The result according to Dr. Supachai Pantichpakdi, Director-General of the WTO represents "... an historic moment for this organisation".

The interim package sets out the terms under which trade negotiations will take place between now and December 2005, the new deadline for completion of the Doha Round. The package has already been strongly criticised by civil society and special interest groups. Planned reductions in agricultural subsidies to European and US farmers have sparked outrage, with French farmers union FNSEA¹ warning that "Un accord à l'OMC ne doit pas remettre en cause l'ambition d'une agriculture française moderne et prospère" – a WTO deal should not undermine the ambition of French agriculture to be modern and prosperous. Oxfam International has countered by saying "... rich countries are still failing to show leadership, pandering instead to vested interests ...". Agriculture accounts for roughly 10% of global trade but is a critical sector for the economies of many developing countries.

The negotiating deadlocks and stalled talks at the WTO, hint at a larger process underway in the global trading system. WTO Membership has expanded rapidly to

include the Governments of many poor and developing countries. These members are altering the dynamics of trade negotiations and are beginning to challenge the dominant position held by the large trading partners such as Australia, the European Union, Japan and the United States of America. Deadlock at the WTO indicates that developing countries are becoming more effective in promoting their trade interests.

What is not clear is if the rich, developed countries still see the WTO as serving their interests? Following the collapse of talks at Cancún last year, both the USA and EU embarked on a furious round of 'Free Trade Agreements' (FTAs), trying to get individual countries to sign up to the deals that they resisted collectively in Cancún.

The 31st July interim agreement is not perfect and like any compromise all sides complain about what they have given up. The next WTO Ministerial scheduled for December 2005 in Hong Kong will play host to extremely tough negotiations and the outcomes for poor and rich countries alike are uncertain. What trade negotiators secured on the 31st July was not a new deal, but a process. The trade disagreements between countries have not been resolved but they have agreed to keep negotiating. This in essence, is the WTO process.

Martin Watson. QUNO. 04.08.2004.

QUNO works together with many developing country negotiators at the WTO (www.quno.org). As part of a Europe-wide initiative, Quaker Peace & Social Witness is working to support Friends and others campaigning for fairer trade rules (www.quaker.org.uk/qpsw).

¹ Federation Nationale des Syndicats d'Exploitants Agricoles (www.fnsea.fr)

An Invitation from British Young Friends

Are you a Quaker aged between 18 and 35ish? How would like to visit young Friends in Britain - on us?!

Young Friends General Meeting has a substantial bursary fund available to enable young Friends from all over the world to travel to Britain to join us at our regular gatherings in February, May, and October.

Although priority is given to more isolated young Friends, if you are amongst a community of your own please do not hesitate to consider a visit either as the

experience of visitors from all over is just as valuable to us as it is for you.

For more information about YFGM, please see <http://yfgm.quaker.org.uk/> - for more information on the bursary fund contact simon gray (YFGM International Secretary), simon@star-one.org.uk or c/o YFGM Office, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 1046 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B29 6LJ, United Kingdom."

News from Woodbrooke

Woodbrooke on the web

May saw the launch of Woodbrooke's new website. Now attracting over 100 visitors a day, the new site offers lots more current information about life at Woodbrooke and its facilities. Surfers can also find information about the short course programme and choose to make a secure on-line booking. The new site is at: www.woodbrooke.org.uk

Home study success

Two years into the launch of the Centre for Postgraduate Quaker Studies (CPQS), Woodbrooke is pleased to announce its first PhD graduate. Carole Spence, from Portland, Oregon received her PhD in August for her thesis on Holiness Quakerism. Carol is the first CPQS student to graduate who chose to study from home, an option also available to readers of *Among Friends*.

Reaching out across Europe

Susan Seymour recently joined Woodbrooke to help encourage more European Friends to make use of Europe's only Quaker study centre. The Corder and Gwen Catchpool Fund is funding the project. The project will be producing:

- * Brochures and material on the website in a variety of European languages
- * Vouchers for European meetings to spend on Woodbrooke courses

- * Regular news items in *Among Friends*, of which this is the first. (You are welcome to reproduce these stories in your local newsletters)

Please do contact Susan with any queries or suggestions.

Courses to consider

- * Two New Year retreats from 30 December 2004 to 2 January 2005, one for Young Friends, the other for women
- * Coming Home to Friends for attenders and new members wanting to find out more about Quakerism: 4-6 March 2005
- * Making learning materials for use in meetings, with Jennie Levin, and librarian Ian Jackson: 22-24 April 2005

For more details on these and other courses see the website or contact Woodbrooke for a brochure. Remember you may be eligible for a Catchpool bursary.

Contact details:

Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, 1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham, B29 6LJ, UK

Tel: +44 (0)121 472 5171 email:

enquiries@woodbrooke.org.uk

Susan Seymour, 52 Dartmouth Park Road, London, NW5 1SN UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 7485 7649 email:

susan@woodbrooke.org.uk

Grants for the Study or Practice of Christian Mysticism

The Elizabeth Ann Bogert Memorial Fund was established to support the study and practice of Christian mysticism and makes annual grants of up to US\$1000. Recent grants were awarded for the following projects: research and presentation of a dramatic performance about English mystic Evelyn Underhill; a travelling exhibition of mystical artwork; assistance to build a hermitage cabin for mystical retreats; development of books, videos, and other resources on mysticism for a university program; scholarly research into the mysticism of Friedrich von Hugel; an inner-city art project by a contemplative religious community.

Grant proposals of no more than two pages are invited and should include a statement of the applicant's

working definition of mysticism, a description of the project, the specific amount requested, how a grant will be used, other sources of funding, and plans for communicating the results to others. Send seven copies of the proposal to Bogert Fund Secretaries, Vinton and Michelina Deming, 4818 Warrington Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19143. Ask two or three people who are familiar with the applicant's work to mail letters of reference directly to the secretaries. E-mail inquiries about the fund may be sent to vintdem00@aol.com.

Proposals and references for 2005 grants are due by March 1, 2005. Decisions will be made in May; grants will be sent in June. Recipients are asked to send a progress report within a year.

Diary Dates 2005

18 - 20 February Young Friends General Meeting (Britain) Newcastle upon Tyne. Includes Enquirers Gathering. Contact yfgm@quaker.org.uk. YFGM Office, Woodbrooke 1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham, B29 6LJ. Tel/Fax: 0121 472 1998. <http://yfgm.quaker.org.uk>

20 - 26 March EMEYF Spring Gathering The Netherlands. See opposite panel. Contact emeyf@qcea.org for details.

24 - 27 March EMES Annual Meeting Bienenberg, near Liestal, Basel, Switzerland. Contact Bronwyn Harwood emes@fwcc.quaker.org

31 March to 3 April Ireland Yearly Meeting The High School, Dublin. Contact Rosemary Castagner quakers@gofree.indigo.ie www.quakers-in-ireland.org

5 -8 May Sweden Yearly Meeting Svartbäcken, Rimbo, Sweden. Contact Julia Ryberg ryberg.svartbacken@swipnet.se or www.kvakare.se

6 - 8 May Netherlands Yearly Meeting Woodbrookershuis, Barchem, east Netherlands. Contact Hadewijch Touwen secretariaat@quaker.dds.nl

3 - 5 June Central Europe Regional Meeting Hungary. Optional day of voluntary work for Habitat for Humanity on 6th June. Contact: Zsuzsa Eastland, 1112 Budapest, Töröcsvár utca 20. Hungary Tel: +361 3196326 zeast@axelero.hu

Apologies! - New Publication

In the last issue of Among Friends we gave the incorrect title of a new book. The correct title is: "When the rain returns: Toward Justice and Reconciliation in Palestine and Israel" This book describes the experiences and analyses of the International Working Party, composed of eleven Quakers and three friends-of-Quakers, who recently visited Israel, Palestine and neighbouring countries. It is a valuable resource in understanding this very complex and troubling issue.

Copies available at \$15 (U.S.) each plus \$5.00 for shipping and handling. International shipping rates will apply to orders outside the U.S. Discount rates are available on orders of five copies or more. American Friends Service Committee, Literature Resources, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102-1479, U.S.A. For more information see the website: www.afsc.org/resource.htm

EMEYF Spring Gathering

Sunday 20 – Saturday 26 March 2005 in The Netherlands

Young F/friends (aged 18-35) from across Europe and the Middle East are invited to EMEYF Spring Gathering 2005 to explore the theme 'Building and breaking walls - exploring the boundaries we make for ourselves and for others in our spiritual, everyday and political lives' in a relaxed and reflective setting, through music and arts, workshops and speakers, worship and fun. Let's share our authenticity, let's be open to others' experiences, let's explore different issues in a welcoming and cheerful multicultural surrounding. During the week there will also be time for reflection on the themes of the World Gathering of Young Friends, to be held in August 2005.

Cost: maximum of 140 Euros (depending on number of participants – more people will decrease the cost!) including food and accommodation.

Information is now up on the EMEYF website: <http://emeyf.quaker.eu.org/>

Or contact the organising committee through Chloe Tan, Gerestraat 24, 2311 NW Leiden, The Netherlands. Tel +31 71 5230952.

Friends House Moscow is registered as a charity in Britain (charity no. 1055965). Donations and enquiries should go to the Treasurer, Eleanor Barden, 33 Booth Lane North, Northampton, NN3 6JQ. Email: info@quakers.ru

Among Friends is the newsletter of Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation.

Also available at: <http://www.fwccemes.org>

We want Among Friends to reflect the diversity of Quaker life and experience across the Section and welcome articles, photos and news of forthcoming events.

There is no set subscription fee for Among Friends. We depend on voluntary subscriptions. Costs of printing and distribution are rising and we hope those who are able to pay will consider an annual donation of around 10 Euros.

Deadline for Among Friends 97: 11 February 2005