

Draft: Integrative Program for Peace in the Near East

For Hallelujah! The Three Rings

The great obstacle to peace or friendly settlement in the Near East is the absence of any semantic approach, i.e. an approach wherein words are used with definite meanings and there are no conclusions without premises. It is the constant shifting of ground in either arguments or verbalizations which makes understanding almost impossible.

The contemporary over-usage of analysis combined with the multiordinal usage of terms (“A word means whatever I wish it to mean, just that and nothing more”), results in nothing but compounded emotions being used on platforms and in debates and articles. The constant shift from religious to historical to racial to pragmatic grounds itself has become an almost insurmountable obstacle.

Integrative thinking requires the over-all examination of all facts and factors. For instance, in Assaying and Petrology all rocks are considered without an economic evaluation. So it is also necessary to examine, at least, the words of Jesus, “Whatever ye do to the least of these my creatures, ye do it unto me;” or the words of Moses, “God created all mankind in His image.” These words are paraded when one wishes to extol his religion but otherwise they are concealed.

The Near East, the Holy Land, the Levant, resembles a rocky mélange more than a forest. There is no prevailing ecology, and there is seldom a dispassionate examination. Economists say that man’s wants emphasize food, clothing, and shelter. Then the basis is changed whenever any protagonist wishes to change.

What is worse (or maybe it is not worse) is that the Bible or some particularist folk-lore is stressed while ignoring the scriptures or folk-lore of others. And some presumable but quite unsubstantiated ethnology is stressed, and then dropped, according to the protagonists’ thesis.

We are going to assume here, and it may be regarded as a major premise—if premises are needed—that the United Nations should be regarded as an operative institution, **not divinely inspired**, as some seem to contend, but as the basis for some kind of harmony, law and order in the world. This theme also holds that while it need not be regarded in too rigid a form, it is perhaps the best of institutions that have been offered to humanity as a basis for peace and understanding.

We also assume, and we admit it is an assuming, that decisions of the bodies of the U. N. should be considered seriously. While we do not fully accept the veto power of the great nations, this is in a sense “law” and it is considerably preferable to the practical veto power of smaller nations,

especially those smatter nations which were not in existence when the U. N. was founded.

We also contend that the abolition of actual history by contending spokesmen works against the possibilities for understanding or lasting agreements. At the present time the most vociferous antagonists smother actual history whenever they can, and as diplomats are not required to have prowess in this field, when closely examined many contentions have no logistics of any kind but are simply oratorical exaggerations of “I am right and you are wrong.”

We are also going to assume and present them as assumptions, the thesis of Boccaccio in his story of the three rings; and the need to regard certain activities, particularly cease-fire activities of the United States, as a potential “point of origin”—in a mathematical and time-space sense, from which we can operate, knowing that any point in time-space is merely an operational activity but needed to establish premises, harmonies and settlements.

This means that Israel is to be accepted as a Nation, a point on which Arabs will have to concede. But if one group has to concede, the other also. At the present time the exaltation of power also falsely includes demands rather than concessions as ways to “peace with justice,” one of the most deluding and deceiving phrases ever coined by man.

Dispassionately—and there will be a hullabaloo on this point, the establishment of Israel follows the teaching of Virgil, the seeking of an ancient historical homeland, as much or more than any Zionist (however defined) effort. As the term “Zionist” is used too multiordinally, and as most students of religions do not study the other faiths deeply, it enables protagonists to cover any traditions or facts they do not wish to have known.

Speaking from the General Semantics of Alfred Korzybski, the multiordinal use of the term “Zion” makes it most difficult to present any calm program. The demand for a homeland may be quite different from the demand for “every man shall have his vine and fig-tree.” There is now very active and sometimes bigoted opposition from those who would verbally accept “every man should have his vine and fig-tree” or even “the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof.”

It is exceedingly difficult to establish any premise here and it is just a well and very contrary to ‘peace with justice’ to accept some UN or Rand-McNally decision or premise for boundaries and existences before proceeding further. The mental abolition of a race, nation, or existing humanity itself is another cause for contentions and misunderstandings. In other words, whatever we think or like, Israel is an existing political entity, whatever boundaries be settled upon.

The next point is that once having admitted at all that a given religion has traditions, which should be honored, we must accept that all religions have traditions that should be honored, and this is one of the basic premises upon which the further plan is based. But in Palestine we are holding for the Boccaccio-contention, later presented in Lessing’s *Nathan the Wise*.

The Christians in particular, and the Muslims to some extent, regard at least parts of Palestine as

“Holy Land.” There is nothing wrong with having a government bound to one of the three traditional faiths control the major portion of the territory involved. This has been the case of the Khalifates, the Crusaders, the Turks—and then the break by the “imperialists” after World War I.

It should be, but we cannot compel it, that sacred places and shrines should be out-side the control of even religious governments, and we should prefer them becoming as if the property of the U. N. or some subsidiary but connected group. There should also be mutual respect shown, and this would mean a concession by the Israelis, that they accept the existence of Islam as a great faith and also work to build up some Islamic institutions outside their immediate boundaries. For our purposes this would involve the restoration of the Hedjaz and the Islamic Hajj which will be referred to below.

The first approach may be ecological, the term “ecology” being employed in the traditional scientific sense, having to do with “nature” and changes thereof. The immediate territory involved is the northern continuation of the Rift formations found in much of Eastern Africa, the Jordan Valley being a particular example. On the whole there is a moderate temperate climate, changing, of course, as one goes eastward to the deserts; and also southward to the Hedjaz. On the whole there is a lack of water and uncertain quantities of rain, but the solutions may be different considering modern technology.

The proper supply of water then makes the temperature range important in the sowing of crops. If the whole Arab world were united politically or ecologically there could be a remarkable balance.

From both a cosmic and historical point of view, there is no solid reason why there could not be a much closer entente between all the Arab nations. For a long time they were united, so to speak, in the Turkish Empire. We must accept the dissolution of the Turkish Empire as a fact, but the division of the Arab peoples is, of course, controversial. We cannot contend here whether they should be politically united or disunited; or whether they should persist as tribal, capitalistic, or socialistic nations. The approach here is that of balanced economy. And if we take Egypt and Sudan into consideration also with a survey of all the natural resources, actual water supplies, potential available water, etcetera of the whole region, we could not only get a better picture, a clear picture, but perhaps a very beautiful picture.

We should avoid what has occurred in West Africa: the establishment of many nations without regard to racial, tribal, economic, geographical and other factors. But these people in many instances have different languages and traditions. There have been very few sound arguments against the “Arab world” with any logical basis whatsoever. The question largely is, can we bring the Jews, the Christians, the Muslims, and the minorities together?

Historically we ought to give some attention to the first Arab occupation of Palestine under Khalif Omar. What did he do? What were his policies? If we would drop all our prejudices and examine history, there were some elements in Omar’s policies which look extremely modern. The difference is that today religion does not play so large a part in the lives of **some** of the parties

involved.

It is most unfortunate that zealous Zionists tend to ignore the programs of the conqueror Saladin and the great Ottoman Turks, especially Suleiman the Magnificent. On the whole, Jewish minorities were well-treated by them. Zealous Zionists tend to ignore this, and it is a question whether they treat their own minorities better than the conquering Muslims treated them.

But this point is not to be fully stressed because while it could offer some grounds for a better understanding between Arabs, Muslims in general, and Jews—whatever we mean by this word—it overlooks the Christians. There are certain Christian claims. All of the religions reject the words of Jesus: “He that liveth by the sword shall perish by the sword.” We cannot impose any teaching of Jesus in the political field, but we can deplore its practical rejection by contentious people during the ages. Still at this point it might be to some advantage to draw a little from the ethics of Jesus and Buddha to establish bases of understanding today. We even believe it would be worthwhile for the papacy to be recognized to some extent in the protection of shrines and holy places, provided the present ecumenical policies continue to gain in force. The present news in this direction is very favorable.

There is of course a complex question here of what is a “Jew.” Is it to be determined by religion? by presumable ancestry? or is there an absolute certain basis therefore? The worst arguments, the most irrefutable arguments, against Zionism come from anthropologists and ethnologists. But this should not mean that we cannot have a Zionist state of some kind, whatever its basis. But it is very awkward to defend a group which constantly sings:

“Which shall see all men free
Tyrants disappearing.”

Assuming one is dispassionate, it is very difficult to observe contentious peoples all discounting the wisdom and moralities of their presumed forebears. It is also very difficult to present any program when any nation chooses to veto UN decisions. We are living in an age where some people act as if the U. N. were established by supermen or divine beings. But we are also living in an age where others act as if international law and order itself is contrary to human virtues. This last we cannot understand at all. It means we are dedicated to war and hypocrisy.

The United States is here to blame. It has cultural exchange with Russia and spends billions of dollars to see that others do not have cultural exchange with Russia! It has no cultural exchange with the Arab world. Even Mehdi's *A Nation of Lions Unchained* underscores the contributions of the Arabs to this world. Roughly speaking these cultures are two:

- a) The vast literature, sacred, literary, scientific, philosophical, etcetera developed during the ages of Islamic empires.
- b) The excellent work of this generation in studying and applying modern education, technology,

science, etcetera, chiefly in the UAR, but gradually extending to the other lands.

The American attacks on Nasser because of his international policy have blinded us to the accomplishments of his people and of the Arab world in general in ancient, medieval, and modern times. And there is even a sect of Jews in Egypt who are separate from the traditionalists. They are never mentioned by politicians.

Cultural understanding is needed by all peoples, and here the U.N. can be taken into consideration because its general attitude is that cultural understanding should be pushed on indefinitely and even "infinitely."

Solution of water problems: The Israelis have done some work in this field. What is needed is an overall group who will study the underground waters, the lost rivers, the methods of salt water conversion most applicable for the Mediterranean, the Gulfs, and the Red Sea. Quite different methods may be feasible, but once this program is engendered it would be of benefit both to the inhabitants and to tourists and pilgrims, especially to pilgrims.

Soil problems: It is sometimes assumed that the absence of water is the main obstacle. But some soil analysis should be made to determine what kind of crops can be grown. When we look back in history we find that many crops have been grown in earlier times. And with our present-day knowledge we can find soils for many crops, crops for many soils.

There is another problem, that of salinity. This is particularly true in Iran but it can arise wherever lands are wrongly worked. The USDA and the Universities, especially at California and Texas, have done excellent work in these fields. It is regrettable that while many peoples of Afro-Asian nations send their students to this land these policies are almost entirely ignored by the press and self-important writers.

Natural resources: On the whole this region is rather deficient, but this conclusion itself comes either from lack of knowledge or failure to make complete geographical and economic-geological surveys.

Reforestation: Some of the lands have been very timid but still successful in the restoration of timber growth, but our contention here is that to promote prosperity one must have an overall economical-botany survey, planning, and program.

Consideration of the Jewish religion: It is most important in that the intransigence of the Israelis as practically impossible for people of Jewish descent, unless they have become anti-Israel, to visit certain places once held by "Jews!" The great Aramaic cultures have been sadly and woefully neglected, and there are instances of ancient monuments being robbed, making it more difficult to study objectively contributions of Jewish people to world cultures.

But the same attitude and policy which should be moral and objective would also require a deeper

consideration of both early Christian and Islamic cultures, and also non-Islamic Arab cultures. Once this scientific attitude is restored, we may learn that Jewish people will have contributed more to the world than what even their most chauvinistic emotionalists know.

Christian considerations: We have already suggested more consideration of the Pope. This is partially based on what might be called “realism,” but there are many non-Catholic nations, which have emissaries at the Papacy. And no matter what our attitudes and opinions are, on the whole, the world—Christian and anti-Christian alike—do give some heed to the voices of “his holiness.”

Arab outlooks as distinct from Islamic outlooks: There is a great deal of confusion here. If Israel is a Jewish nation, then it should recognize other religions. If Zionism is not Jewish but political and territorial, based on the Hebraic traditions of the principles of refuge, more or less, then we must take into consideration all displaced personalities. The ecological correctives above should be applied to all the neighboring lands. We do not know any “just” correctives. There have been multitudes of Palestinians (so-called) removed from their place of origin. But there have also been multitudes of “Jews” forcefully ejected from some Arab lands, notably Iraq and Yemen. The injustices balance. We have already seen compulsory balances on a much larger scale in the cases of India and Pakistan.

There is an odd element here: that both many Palestinians (so-called) and many Jews (so-called) are not descendants of earlier Semites—and there are many who are. The whole subject of refugees ought to be considered universally and dispassionately, going back to the right of man to have his own vine and fig tree, let us say. Desert reclamation could provide, but constant harping at the injustices of history do no good. We may not be able to balance and overcome man’s injustice to man, but we can try to find mitigating correctives.

The Islamic restoration: The Hajj is a recognized institution. It is recognized by devotees of Islam and by all travel agencies of whatever kind. Multitudes of devotees do go to Mecca and Medina, have always gone. It is possible to put the pilgrimage on a paying basis. Salt-water conversion establishments on the Red Sea, plus pumping and other resource surveys, plus the building of proper highways, could follow with the establishments of inns and hostels. These could be either under the control of Saudi Arabia or of a consortium of Islamic nations and organizations satisfactory to Saudi Arabia. The charges for tenancy should be fixed in such a way as to insure pro-fits and from these profits help amortize the expenses suggested above.

It is possible to have institutions financed, let us say, by the foreign aid of the United States or by the World Bank, or some other agencies. But they should be pat on a sound business basis. The Hajj will continue. Many devotees would be willing to pay. It is a hard fact quite over looked by emotional contenders. Indeed, many wealthy Muslims might even wish to contribute thereto. It would make the Hajj a real institution and enable many multitudes to go on the pilgrimage even with the blessings and support of the whole world.

(This is, of course, a rough draft, and revisions may include many facts and factors overlooked.)