

Global Order Council
August 12th, 1984.

THE GLOBAL PRIORITIES.

It is still Sunday of week 6, the council of a lifetime. We have worked for years to be where we are now. We have spent time, energy, money to get us where we are now. The Safari pushed our imagination far beyond our preconceived notions of our task of 5 years ago. The model building was not in the hands of specialists, but in the hands of all of us. Many times we felt inadequate - why was my holon chosen to work on this? But even being inadequate, the long days and nights everyone spent in preparation for the next plenary proved our cynicism wrong. We have come up with some very specific models and decisions. We have a strong will to make these work, as individuals and as a network of individuals bonded in care. We have not decided to agree on everything, but we have decided to push each other on our life decision relative to each one of these model building arenas.

So here we are. We have come this far. Not some other kind of far, this far. All of us hoped we would end up with something different. The models we have now do not contain all of our insights, biases and perspectives. Yet here we are. You could almost call it a moment of disillusionment. These models are our guides to the future. We are going on this pilgrimage, not stupidly, not blindly, not without reason, but still realising there are so many paths. We decide on this one, in complete ambiguity. Many of us had hoped we would be more secure now, more sure of this path. Illusions. Yet the decision to enter on this pilgrimage of the next four months is, I believe, the most creative decision before us. I would like to read you some poetry about pilgrimage. This one is called : "The Journey of the Magi". It is written by Mr. T.S.Eliot.

°A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.'
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation,
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky.
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

A pilgrimage begins with a leave taking, a farewell to our old ways of doing things; a farewell to our old friends and colleagues. When we start on a pilgrimage, we have a goal, a destination, corporately and individually. When we arrive there, the seeing (in the sense Bishop Jim meant seeing) of that destination changes our whole perspective. Not just of the next 16 years, of the 54 areas, of ourselves, but of everything. The Year of the Order Council has brought us to the point of starting us on this pilgrimage. We do not know how we will return from it. If we allow ourselves to see, to listen, to breath into ourselves the birth and the death.

The priorities are the landmarks, what we see on the way of the pilgrimage. Some of us will want to stay draped around one particular landmark or another, to hang on to the beauty of the present or to be caught fast by the guilt of the past. Some will want to bypass some of these landmarks. All of them, enticing or threatening, are our signs that we are on the road of the pilgrimage. In Portugal, our village is on the road where the pilgrims pass on their way to the national pilgrimage centre, Fatima. They walk to Fatima. For some it is a two week journey on foot. Some say that you cannot call yourself a Portuguese if you don't make this journey to Fatima by foot at least once in your lifetime. Many resting places are offered to these pilgrims. Some provide just a bit of shade or a cool drink of water. Others provide a bed or a simple meal; others spiritual reflection and admonition. But all of these resting places are places to go on from.

So let me describe the Priorities we have named for this year, knowing they are our landmarks on the pilgrimage. I will describe them in two ways. One is the gift we bring to these, and the second is the challenge that is staring us in the face, where we have intuitions and values, but need much thought, research, model building and prayer.

21 PRIMARY UNITS, GLOBALLY COVENANTED.

Through years of dialogue, months of model building and weeks of heated discussion we have come to the consensus to organise ourselves in such a way that we can and will be located in the 54 areas by the year 2000. We have decided it takes 21 backbones, 21 mother houses, 21 centres of order formation, 21 basements with lockers, full of things too bothersome to bring on a pilgrimage. We have teams of priors who have, and take the time, not just to be project directors, or organisational managers of personnel managers, but people who care for every single soul in the house. Fr. Francis George called them spiritual directors. Our biggest concern is not the money or strategy of locations, but our ability to call forth the depth of every human soul. That is what will bring us to the 54 areas.

Through the work of the council we have new ways to come at our covenant as members of the order, but we have to figure out the objective base, the objective structure, the symbols and markings of each, appropriate to the diverse cultures and traditions that we represent. Also we have to work through in our now larger houses, how they not become bastions of an institutionalized corporate culture in which we can hide. We have to discover how our stronger order presence can be the node for the Movement and the movements of our age, so we can keep wrestling with the tension of being an order and being a movement. It has to do with decor, our language, style and presence wherever we are. This does require every individual, every family, every house to do serious thinking and creativity.

CORPORATE SELF SUPPORT MATURATION.

We bring to this priority some of the most specific models of this council. We have solid experience in the ventures from which we can learn and on which we have to build. Our gift is that we are not just after having bread or rice on the table and education for our children, but that we see a way of implementing a vision in which the community and workplace are linked together in new patterns of action and meaning.

The challenge is how we make this work in developing nations. How do we become self sufficient there? How do we develop a new self understanding, get the skills and organise ourselves so we can be standing on our own legs, wherever we are? Without having dealt with this it will remain very difficult for us to work in places like Mali, Bangladesh or Upper Volta.

INTEGRATED IERD PHASE III ACTIVITIES.

The short IERD plenary several weeks ago highlighted some of the tremendous openings we have in participating and accelerating the network of people in rural development. The possibility of an Asian nations event, work across the Caribbean, the linking of native communities in the west and south of North America. The network of alternative collectives across northern Europe. Our Global Advisory Board is allowing us in many regions to work shoulder to shoulder with villagers, government ministers, extension workers, agencies and rural universities. During this past year in Portugal we worked closely with the Commission on the Status of Women, the Red Cross, the Catholic Church, several government departments, an agricultural university, German volunteers, a Brazilian dentist, Dutch embassy money, EEC administrators, Rotarians and very cooperative wine salesmen. And that was the key to allowing us to focus on human development, on the formation in methods of reflection and engagement. Our 16 year strategies document has great images of how we link, align, the necessary organisations in an alliance that creates an effective regional strategy.

The challenge in this priority is how we take all the learnings from the IERD and apply them in our own work. There is also the question of how we integrate ourselves in the existing and the to-be-created regional development strategies. One of the most frightening scenarios for the year 2000 is the one that indicates that most likely the more developed nations will have done well in organising their livelihood in the information age society. It also indicates that the 30 or 40 poorest countries will be as poor as they are now, if not worse. This scenario has to be proven wrong if we have any integrity as a human race.

STRATEGIC COLLABORATIVE TRAINING

We bring many gifts to this priority. At least 21 centres of training, some in construction like in India, some in the process of acquisition. Secondly, our assumption that all people can learn the skills to participate as creators in this world. Then our vast experience. How many HDTI's, VLI's and ITI's haven't we done! And, now, through the IERD we have a vast network of people who can do training and people who want training. The HDTI in Mexico this fall is a great example of this.

The challenge in this arena then becomes how we can facilitate events, where we bring these groups together and where our role might not be focused on how to teach social or economic development, but on enabling the human factor, enabling people to commit themselves to implement what they learn through a lifelong vocational decision.

STRUCTURED VOCATIONAL CHALLENGES

The gift we bring here is that most of our programmes and structures are out to challenge our colleagues, ourselves,

organisations and villages. This is what we are good at and never good enough. It is an endless task. Having the opportunity to broaden the distribution of priorship roles in our houses is one way we will do this. Some of our elder members have requested to not be given a priory assignment, also to enable this. The new vision of guilds in specific arenas across our houses is after the same. The creation of phase I structures in Nairobi and India and the concern of the phase I programme beyond highschool reflect this concern for vocation.

The challenge is how we occasion a profound dialogue between these engagement opportunities and the question of vocation. How do we do a volunteer type programme in North America? How do we do the returned volunteer events, the academy and the Tertian programme appropriate to our age. The fragility of our lives, the fragility of the life of this planet requires the steadfastness of the perspective of a lifelong vocational commitment.

SOCIO-SPIRIT RESEARCH NETWORK

The gift in this priority is that we have experienced in this Year of the Order Council a great way of networking ourselves to do research and model building. Now we also have access to a network of organisations across the planet involved in caring for its long range future. The safaris enabled among us an exposure to the new that created the most artfilled and imaginative plenary ever witnessed in this hall.

The challenge seems to be in the arena of the posture of openness that enables a dialogue between ourselves and the world in order to change our lives and what we do every day. The other challenge is of course the spirit experiment. How do we rediscover the solitary and the corporate exercises that enable us to be sensitive, stand present to that what is. It seems that our life depends on us taking the time to work this through, ground it in our past, ground it in our future, ground it in the places where we live. And we have decided to do this not just isolated in each primary unit but as a network of houses linked together. And we have to decide the events which create the deadlines and the accountability to make this networking come off in all arenas of our life.

THE PILGRIMAGE TOWARDS THE YEAR 2000

The last priority, but the first for these next four months. The path ahead isn't clear. If you would have wrapped up your work by continents and primary units in just these past few days, it would only have been an indication that we were on an old path with clear signposts and easy to read roadmaps. We are on a new path. We lay the track as we go. We have models and screens but none of that takes away the ambiguity, the need to create every day anew. It is unlikely that we won't get lost. If we come back to the same place over and over again, the same discussions keep happening, we must be going in circles. And you hope someone will tell you that you are lost. You know that you are lost when the same things you have used before to sustain you do not sustain you anymore. The

biggest problem occurs when you do not know that you are lost. Then no signposts will help you.

So we go to the end of our pilgrimage of four months over hazardous roads to an unknown destination. But we'll recognize the destination by the awe present there. Pilgrimages go to tops of mountains, places of illumination and enlightenment, places of magnificent, awesome creation. In Portugal they say, you go on a pilgrimage crying and weeping, and you return singing and laughing. You wonder why we would return like that, to the same problems, the same people, the same order. But you return as a winner, realising there is always another issue at hand, always a reason to be awakened and to wake up, to make the next step. It is the experience of the Sea of Tranquility. The certitude that everything is as clear as it ever will be; the problemlessness, that we have all that is finally required; the joy, the decision to live in the wonder of our existence's every birth and death. We return with a concrete symbol. In Rome they sell plastic versions of the St. Peters to the pilgrims. It is a concrete symbol of having made the journey. We will have to invent between now and then these public symbols of the pilgrimage, symbols of our covenant and life decision. All of the next four months, maybe all of the next 16 years are this pilgrimage to repent on behalf of humanity in the 21st century. We are ready to go forth. We have the decision, the corporate strength and the models to participate in a unique way in the shaping of a new age with a new people.