

INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

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Villa Serbelloni
PaP

FROM: KWT

DATE: July 2, 1959

TO:

LFK		
FMR		
JM		
JZM		
JJM		
GRP (on return)		

COMMENTS:

Memorandum to RF Villa Serbelloni Committee

JAN 20 1962

DBF

SUBJECT: I should like to propose six topics as a possible framework for discussing the Villa Serbelloni. They are:

What functions could it perform.....

- 1) not presently being performed by other institutions?
- 2) in relations between the Anglo-Saxon world and Europe?
- 3) in contributions to the study of vital problems in western society?
- 4) through contacts with existing European institutions?
- 5) as a meeting place of western and non-western societies? and
- 6) as a possible link between east and west.

JM has addressed himself with great insight and clarity to some of the unique functions the villa might perform at this point in time. He sees it as a channel for intercommunication between the Anglo-Saxon and European intellectual worlds. The question is what arrangements are most likely to foster intercommunication. I should like at the outset to urge we think carefully about the negative side or the risks that the Villa may merely duplicate what other groups and institutions are already doing. This will help in marking out the positive purposes it might serve. I have in mind particularly the moderately to very large conferences held periodically in Europe as in the United States. I have grave doubts that most of these gatherings as a rule do more than increase the girths of participants. Edward Shils who engineered the Congress for Cultural Freedom conference at Rhodes last fall on "problems of new nations" told me the conferees tended throughout to talk past one another. He felt that a week was scarcely a beginning and that discussions never went beyond set speeches. A one- or two-day meeting is even less likely to yield

fruit or serve a serious purpose. The best people seek to avoid such meetings even when the sponsors up the bidding in the form of stipends and attractive surroundings. If they attend they contribute less than if they had stuck to their knitting.

We may want to consider the experiences various international professional societies have had with different types of conferences. Since these are the associations through which professional inter-communication is presumed to go on, their score cards of successes and failures may be worth mentioning. Most groups like the International Political Science Association limit their full-dress congresses to every second or third year partly for financial reasons but even more on intellectual grounds. The president of one such group said recently that circusses and grand spectacles are necessary to hold an international membership together but meetings in which a scholar reads a paper to which no one listens and where he in turn returns the compliment are barren of any lasting result. For this reason most of the associations provide for smaller meetings every second and third years in which men with common interests work hard for a week on a carefully defined problem.

There is another type of conference which if conferences are to be held strikes me as far more fruitful. With SS support, a small group of British scholars in international relations are meeting four times each year over the next three years to explore the problems of building theories of international relations. Under the Chairmanship of the new Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University, Herbert Butterfield, they come together for four to five day sessions, prepare original papers on critical issues in their field and debate their subject with a thoroughness that is most impressive. Their writings are bound to reflect the value of these discussions and the papers I have read as revised through the group process will inevitably push forward the frontiers of knowledge.

The point of all this is to say that I should think the Villa might sponsor intellectual activities that drew on the favorable experiences of enterprises like the Cambridge group. I can see a program that ran the gamut from this type of activity to certain of the things that were done at the Princeton Institute for Advanced Studies in the days of the late Edward Meade Earle. Beyond this summer seminars modelled after the Social Science Research Council six to ten weeks conferences would also be useful. Five to ten international lawyers and diplomats might come together for a summer with their families to carry further the discussion contained in recent classics like Wilfred Jenks' Common Law of Mankind - a suggestion Dean Rusk once made. Intellectual activities of this

sort made possible through the hospitality of the villa are in my view unique. On the other hand, I can think of a great many large-scale, short-term efforts that would merely duplicate what others are doing.

I should add that this concept to my mind at least is not incompatible with a few Arden House meetings of so-called opinion-makers. There is probably need in some form or other for a European Arden House. I would regret, however, if this crowded out the smaller, more creative ventures that in the end provide new ideas for the public endeavors.

(2) The villa for reasons JM has so forcefully outlined could also play a creative role in reuniting the Anglo-Saxon and European intellectual communities on the basis of genuine partnership. I have observed the same separation in the Social Sciences he describes for the Humanities perhaps with one important difference. The United States in particular has exerted a highly selective influence on European thought through an out pouring of reprints from scholarly centers subsidized from public or private sources. Thus one foreign policy center in France suddenly became absorbed in the decision-making approach that is championed by scholars at a certain American center. In looking for the cause of this influence, one need look no further than the flood of free pamphlets and articles from this country chosen less for their excellence than because of a surplus of funds in an over-generous publication budget. So far as I could tell, interests of this sort seldom run deep but tend rather to produce awkward translations of American concepts without genuine exchange or discussion. They lead rather to fads than fundamental scholarship especially when personal contacts are lacking. We see the same phenomenon in translations of German sociologists in this country producing a way of thinking that has little connection with the context of the importing culture.

One other development may be worth underscoring. The best fruits of European scholarship had living interpreters before and during World War II in the refugee scholars who staffed institutions like the New School for Social Research. An honor roll of American social scientists today, as NSB often pointed out, contains names like Viner, Wolfers, von Neumann, Morgenthau and Leontiev. This movement has largely ceased and nothing has taken its place. The Rockefeller Foundation through the villa might address itself to the search for practical alternatives made possible through intensive contacts among some of the best minds on both sides of the Atlantic and the English Channel. I suspect, among other reasons American preoccupation with aid to the newer societies has delayed more

imaginative consideration of this problem.

(3) I would hope that attention might be paid to some of the vital, unsolved problems in the west. In SS program we have referred to these as "contemporary problems." I would question whether basic research in the experimental and scientific sense was possible on the shores of Lake Como. This is primarily a job for the universities and first-class research institutes. However there remains a wide range of crucial problems to which creative intelligence could make a decisive contribution. One thinks of the "emergent problems in foreign policy" referred to more than once in DR's President's Reports. The universities have not been too helpful in this area and busy public servants lack the leisure freed from day-to-day pressures for significant efforts. A few good minds with apparatus no more elaborate than first-rank intelligences could just conceivably make a dent on these problems. Similarly, in the more speculative fields alluded to by JM, the villa might well provide a setting for important study. This need not be its only function but could be one of its more important roles - an Institute for Advanced Study of Emergent Problems that two, five or ten years later would engage public attention.

(4) If the villa is to do creative and significant work, it should have easy and friendly contacts with the best existing European institutions. I have already mentioned the Geneva Institute for Advanced International Studies and JM could add the Croce Institute of Historical Studies under Chabod in Naples. The Turin Political Science and History group also comes to mind as do the Foundation of Political Science, the Sixth Section and the Institute Perspective in Paris. Chatham House, the German Council on Foreign Relations in Frankfurt and the Institute of Contemporary History in Munich are other possibilities as are the IFO Institute in Munich, the Economics Center of the Free University in Berlin, the National Institute of Social and Economic Research in London, and the Ankara Institute of Public Finance and Economic Development in Turkey. Other officers will have suggestions which should be considered as well. These centers are the reservoirs of human knowledge and vital scholarship on which the villa must draw if it is to bring to a focus the best efforts in Europe.

We should also consider the possibility of ties with key educational leaders who are responsible for policy at some of these institutions. In an earlier day, we might have thought of men like Hector Hetherington, Cyril James and Carr-Saunders. I am less clear about the present crop of university leaders and presidents. None-the less, names like Herbert Butterfield, Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge, Sir Oliver Franks, Whitney Griswold, Robert Goheen, Jacques Freymond of Geneva, etc., etc., others have merit both for their intellectual qualities and by virtue of the positions they hold.

I would hope at the same time we might consider ties with the best American institutions. Incidentally, one American institution that ought not for reasons of modesty be excluded is the foundation itself. We are not devoid of extraordinary human resources ourselves. Is it inconceivable that one or two of our best minds might occasionally flee the battle of memoranda and declinations long enough to think through a long-postponed problem of study?

(5) The villa might also be a meeting place of western and non-western thinkers. It is blessed with the same advantage of geography and political neutrality that, for example, has made Switzerland and Belgium attractive to former colonial peoples. Additionally, the Foundation's name and its long tradition of working for the welfare of mankind places it above the battle in contemporary international politics. Furthermore, Asians and Africans complain of a lack of personal contacts and attention at the great western educational institutions. Might the staff and friends of the villa remedy this at least for a handful of this group? Or is it possible that RF fellows from Asian, African and Middle Eastern countries might at least stop off en route to or from their places of study?

(6) Finally I am fascinated by the thought that eventually contacts with countries like Yugoslavia and Poland might be strengthened by means of the Villa. Non-Communist scholars of these nationalities are especially sensitive to the break down of ties with western thought. I can imagine that through the villa we could be enabled to do certain things we might not do under established program. This is the most long-run and uncertain of the goals but not thereby the least important.

I cannot forebear offering one concluding suggestion. I would like to see the Foundation take direct initiatives in the intellectual activities of the villa. We have human resources that may sometimes be half utilized in the battle of memoranda and correspondence. I should like to see us consider a modest Foundation effort in Europe not unlike some of the Twentieth century fund's efforts in the United States. I can expand on this if anyone is interested.