



PEOPLE TO PEOPLE PROGRAM

1608 K STREET, N.W.

WASHINGTON 6, D. C.

VETERANS COMMITTEE

Co-Chairmen:

CAPTAIN EDWARD V. RICKENBACKER
LEWIS K. GOUGH

SUMMARY OF REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT RELATIVE TO VISIT BY VETERANS' COMMITTEE (PEOPLE TO PEOPLE PROGRAM) TO EUROPE AND ISRAEL, JULY 8 TO 23, 1957, TO MEET WITH VETERANS' LEADERS ABROAD

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of the tour by the Veterans' Committee of PPP was to further the general objectives of the PEOPLE TO PEOPLE PROGRAM, as expressed by the President last fall, and particularly to further friendship, good will, unity and understanding between the Veterans of the respective countries visited and the Veterans of this country.

THE COMMITTEE

Those making the trip were the National Commanders of six major Veterans' Organizations of the United States representing over six million members in their combined membership and indirectly representing our country's twenty-three million living Veterans more than any other six citizens today. Their meeting together and working together to implement this program is an innovation in itself as the leaders of these organizations have never endeavored such a thing collectively before. The personnel of the Committee follows:

LEWIS K. GOUGH, Pasadena, California - Co-Chairman Veterans' Committee, PEOPLE TO PEOPLE PROGRAM

W. C. "DAN" DANIEL, Danville, Virginia - National Commander, The American Legion

DOMINICK L. STRADA, West New York, New Jersey - National Commander, AMVETS

WILLIAM J. GILL, Cleveland, Ohio - National Commander, Catholic War Veterans

JOSEPH F. BURKE, Bayonne, New Jersey - National Commander, DAV

COOPER T. HOLT, Chattanooga, Tennessee - National Commander, VFW

HERBERT BLOCK, Boston, Massachusetts - National Chief of Staff, Jewish War Veterans

These National Commanders form the permanent Committee for Veterans (PPP) and will continue to work for the implementation of the program after they have left office as Commander of their respective organizations.

Captain Edward V. Rickenbacker, Co-Chairman of the Committee, was not on the tour because of business responsibilities which conflicted at this time.

THE TRIP ITSELF

The members of the Committee were gratified by the receptions and the receptiveness of the Veterans' Leaders of countries visited. These veterans abroad were genuinely interested in the program of People to People contact. That they were curious as to our purposes and objectives was indicated by their questions. Some of the leaders of foreign countries indicated that the idea was not new - Le President of the Union Nationale Des Combattants in Paris indicated that many of the Veterans Organizations of France had created the "Alliance Atlantique des Anciens Combattants" (Atlantic Alliance of Veterans) to reinforce unity between Veterans and to improve understanding. A similar organization "Lamplighters of the World" was mentioned in Rome. French and Israeli Veterans have recently visited the U. S. in the interest of understanding and friendship - but without coordination of such a program as ours.

At each visit the Committee met with Veterans' Leaders in the capitals and in the countryside, explaining the purpose of our mission and answering questions. We emphasized the private nature of our visit - separate from Government - pointing out that we raised all of our own funds from private sources. We stressed the unity of our great Veterans Organizations in implementing the program - an innovation in itself. We emphasized that in the interest of understanding we desired to learn more about these people we visited - their aim, objectives, hopes, ambitions and viewpoints. In numerous cases our "hosts" expressed viewpoints not entirely in line with ours - as between respected friends who have confidence and trust in each other. This in itself served to clear the air and gave us an opportunity to correct misunderstandings.

We invited all the Veterans' Leaders visited to visit us, and some are already planning such trips.

Our PPP was furthered in other than Veteran contacts - with the Press, Government and Military Officials, and people we met everywhere.

Language was no great barrier - we found many who could talk English and interpret for us. One of our members of Italian derivation talked to the Veterans in Italy in their own language.

Our U.S. Veterans' Leaders in some of our Posts abroad were most helpful and could serve as liaison in the future. The same applies to U.S.I.A. Officials abroad who could assist in details - providing they receive adequate advance notice and briefing from U.S.I.A. Headquarters in Washington, D. C.

ATTITUDE ABROAD

(A) FAVORABLE. For the most part the Veterans' Leaders in each country were most favorable and constructive in their comments concerning our mission and program. Following are typical:

ALEXIS THOMAS, President, ATLANTIC ALLIANCE OF VETERANS (FRANCE): "We have the pleasure of proving our pride of having participated in the same combats for a common ideal of liberty. Our very close fellowship must permit the frank explanation which is normal between trusted friends. We must affirm the confidence, esteem, mutual trust and regard that exist between us upon every occasion. Such meetings between Veterans make possible useful and highly desired discussions, permitting us to better appreciate our respective position and above all permitting better mutual understanding. Thus, the ambiguity which hurts us and may hurt the cause of liberty can be lifted thanks to our respective organizations and their influence on public opinion in both our countries. I remain convinced that we will succeed in the future to do what we had achieved in the past, that is a solid block on which could be briefed the Franco-American policy of friendship".

Quoting GENERAL R. O. MARIO MAZZETTI (ITALY) Secretary-General, COMITATO LAMPADA DELLA FRATERNITA: "Veterans must unite in order to free future generations from the spectre of war. Veterans and their families must make themselves heard by the governments".

Quoting GENERAL ARTURO SCATTINI, President, ASSOCIATION NAZIONALE BERSAGLIERI (ITALY): "Horrors of war form the basis of brotherhood which will strive for elimination of war. The People to People Program will help achieve this".

Quoting GENERAL LUIGI LOMBARDI (FOREIGN MINISTER OF DEFENSE): "Such contacts between Veteran leaders is very useful for both our countries. We hope many of our people will visit you in the States".

Quoting MR. NUSSBAUM, President, ISRAELI WORLD WAR II VETERANS ORGANIZATION (ISRAEL): "I would like to say a few words only about my first impression and the experience we all have had in these two days which our guest spent with us. It really seemed to me that the words 'good will' expresses everything: searching for a way to truth and mutual understanding, mutual aid and united fight for freedom and peace. I hope that this visit will advance the reality and the aim of fraternity and peace amongst the nations and peoples".

(B) CRITICAL. We found some misunderstanding and disagreement abroad concerning international, political and economical developments. Veterans' Leaders in the countries visited welcomed the opportunity to give us their viewpoints. They were appreciative of our desire to encourage their frank discussions of issues which affect our respective countries and our assurance that we were desirous of learning from them their attitude and receiving their suggestions towards strengthening our alliance. We do not minimize the difficulty of the task of furthering the favorable climate of friendship and understanding between peoples. Our trip emphasized the necessity of continued People to People contact based on the mutuality of interest to achieve the purposes and objectives of our program.

FOLLOW-UP

Our tour was a good beginning but follow through is essential to derive full value of our mission. By this we mean similar visits abroad from mutual groups - by other of the 41 People to People Committees; return visits to the

United States by those abroad; liaison contacts abroad kept active by correspondence and by key personnel of our various Veterans organizations living abroad, etc.

We have extended invitations to Veterans Leaders from abroad to attend our National Conventions; with distinguished guest status and speaking privileges. We are contemplating issuing courtesy cards to traveling Veterans from abroad who have proper authorization. Pilgrimages by Veterans, such as the Legion Pilgrimage to Europe and the VFW pilgrimage to Latin America this fall are valuable PPP operations.

Essential to follow-up is the necessary financial means and supervisory and clerical help to implement the program sufficiently to accomplish our mission.

PILOT OPERATION FOR GUIDANCE OF OTHERS

Since our Committee was the first to complete a trip abroad, it is hoped that our experiences and suggestions will prove of value to others. Advance planning is necessary and liaison abroad must be found to assist with hotel reservations, setting up meetings, press conferences, memorial ceremonies, etc. In any group trip there are bound to be irritations and disappointments and the members need advance indoctrination; also, those participating must be mature and understanding people. We were fortunate in having such a group on our tour.

Our trip was a working trip with little time for rest, sight-seeing or amusement. This was due to the fact that we covered much territory in the brief time the Commanders could take from their busy State Convention schedule of their organizations. We are agreed, however, that time for rest and relaxation must be provided.

We also found it helpful in Europe to distribute previously prepared PPP ribbons with the symbols of the clasped hands, which were pinned on all guests as well as our Committee to further a feeling of fraternity.

Our Committee found it most helpful to participate in Memorial Services and similar ceremonies, such as rekindling the flame at the Arc de Triumphe, laying wreaths at monuments for our fallen comrades, etc. Perhaps other Committees can find suitable ceremonies for such participation.

CONCLUSION

We believe that our visit was a worthwhile pilot operation in developing friendship, good will and understanding between Veterans' Leaders here and abroad. We believe that it was a good thing to permit Veterans' Leaders abroad to sound off in closed sessions to further the cause of understanding and to satisfy our counterparts abroad that their viewpoints would be given due consideration in the interest of mutual friendship and understanding. In general, we were most gratified at the receptiveness and friendship to us and our mission, evidenced in every country that we visited. We believe the important thing now in furthering the cause of our program is to keep the momentum and to follow-up properly toward the attainment of our objective. In summary, we believe that intercontinental friendship is the best substitute for the intercontinental missile.