

SERVAS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 1980

held at Anand Niketan Ashram, Rangpur (Kawant), Gujarat, India, 27-31 Dec.

Representatives appointed to participate in business sessions:

Graham Thomas (President)
Barbara Whitehead (General Secretary)
Denise Waech (Assistant Treasurer and Switzerland)
Antonie Fried (Regional Co-ordinator for Europe)
Joan Samaru (England, Scotland and Wales)
Hugh Fay (Ireland)
Flemming Holm Larsen (Denmark)
Luigi Uslenghi (Italy)
Peter Brock (Germany)
Theodor Katz (Sweden)
Inger Amundsen (Norway)
Emilia Boikliev (Hungary)
Benjamin Jeremias (Israel)
Ibrahim Youssef (Egypt)
Jo Graham (USA)
Arne Hansen (Canada)
Lilia de Hernandez (Mexico)
E.K. Narter Olaga (Ghana)
Prisca Holotsi (Zambia)
T.K. Sibsurun (Mauritius)
Harivallabh Parikh (India) (Southern Asia Co-ordinator)
H.C.H. Soysa (Sri Lanka)
Yukuo Itose (Japan)
Seung Sam Um (Korea)
Flory Mardjuki (Indonesia)
Richmond Rikard Bell (Australia)

Others, hosts and travellers etc. who attended the conference:

England

Rosalind Schama
Ronnie Hertzman
Amanda Seely

Denmark

Maja Holm Larsen
Ruben Hjorth
Srisamon Hjorth
Jens Andreassen
Gunhild Andreassen
Inga Holmberg
Joan Holmberg
Susanne Hausborg
Mette Larsen
Jytte Franck
Karen Kudahal
Maja Christensen
Hildberg Christensen
Bodil Petersen
Inger Houlberg

Ireland

Doris Fay

France

Hervé Le Vigouroux

Italy

Rose Canepari
Marcella Ragazzoli
Liliana Rigamonti
Iris Maberry
Rocco Altieri
Emilia Sciancalepore
Antonio Gadaleta
Gabriella Malvestio
Elisabeth Lämmermann

Sweden

Eva Nyquist
Hillevi Sundbeck
Ulla Jensen

Holland

Lucia Boland

Switzerland

Jacques Greutert

Norway

Gotefred Rygh

Malta

Gordon Roberts

Others attending the conference (continued):

Poland

Irena Wyrzykowska
Hanna Vollmer
Langda Zofia Dankiewicz
Barbara Sklewinowa
Levcy Mietkiewicz
Lucyna Winnicka
Urbanska Krystyna

West Germany

Horst Brechtelsbauer
Renate Kühner
Dieter Niedenfuhr
Ted Schmidkonz

Israel

Hana Jeremias
Ishay Bharat
Anuza Gal

U.S.A.

Muriel Jencks
Clinton Jencks
Bud Aspenleiter
Twyla Aspenleiter
Tor Begnar
Janke Bialek
Herbert Guyette
Nell Guyette
Marlin Darrah
Lydia Tabor
Timothy McAtcor

Sri Lanka

Lily Soysa
Kumani Semage
Susila Semage

India

Suresh Ram
Moher Jassawala
Sanjeevanath Aikal
Ramakrishna
Jagdish Parikh
Bhagwanbhai Shah
V.K. Shirpurkar
Babubhai N. Chokshi
Khangar Dharmada
Nandlal Shah
Ishwarbhai Acharya
Ramanben Acharya
Kantibhai Patell
Vijay Doshi
R.P. Sahar
Bhagwatsinh Mohta
Jayanti Raval
Prabhaben Parikh

Australia

Joan Rikard Bell
Kim Rikard Bell
Tahna Rikard Bell
Geoff Sheldon
Neryle Sheldon

Saturday 27th December 1980.

1. The proceedings opened at 3.30 with the singing of a devotional song by the sisters of the Ashram. A ceremonial candle to mark the opening of the conference was lighted by the President, Graham Thomas, who then outlined the procedure the sessions would follow. Only appointed representatives would be allowed to speak and vote, but other participants could be present at any sessions as observers, or, if they wished, they could plan their own discussions and hold them elsewhere.
2. Harivallabh Rurikh, secretary of Servas India and co-ordinator of the Southern Asia region, told the gathering about the origins, thirty two years ago, of this ashram, and of his acceptance of Servas (Peacebuilders) as a movement working in the spirit of Gandhi. Servas India had now become integrated with his own movement, which was to bring freedom from exploitation for the 'adivasi', the tribes outside the Hindu system living in that region. The influence of him and his wife was such that eventually, people became friendly, murders nearly ceased, and an Open Court was set up to settle local disputes. Irrigation and improved agriculture changed the face of society; credit co-operatives were started and people began to prosper. Ignorance and injustice were successfully fought. 78% of India is rural, and it is there that progress must be made. The message of 'people's power' had been spread to other provinces, and a 'life education school' combined with practical work in the ashram had ensured development of crafts and skills which stayed in the local area. 1100 foreign friends had visited the ashram, and so the work of peacebuilding spread to a wider world. Harivallabh thanked the participants for coming, and was glad that none were prevented by visa difficulties or expense. All the expenses of the conference and the tour would be borne by Servas India.
3. Graham Thomas delivered greetings from absent friends, including Martha Simon, Reva King, Lydia Jones, Jorge Zoppolo, Birgitte Damsgaard, and a message of goodwill from Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India. Sadness was shared at the death of Masuo Amano of Japan, and Bill Brown of New Zealand, Servas secretaries who had died suddenly during the past year. Fifty participants among those present then introduced themselves and told us something of their activity in Servas. Twenty-one countries were represented, but some of the appointed delegates had not yet arrived.
4. The Minutes of 1978 conference, having been previously distributed, were accepted and signed by the President.

Sunday 28th December 1980

5. Graham Thomas, President of Servas International, addressed the gathering on "The Growth of Servas", quoting extensively from the Brandt Commission Report "North-South; a programme for Survival" as he thought it had a special bearing on the task of Servas. He pointed out that the number of hosts and travellers in relation to the population figures was far higher in the 'North' than in the 'South', and hoped that ways could be found to improve the effectiveness of Servas in bringing understanding between North and South, and strengthening the United Nations in its efforts to create a better economic order and put an end to the arms race.
6. Barbara Whitehead, General Secretary of Servas International, then read her report of Servas activity over the past two years, giving further evidence of the uneven development of the movement in the world as a whole. There were contacts in eighty-five countries; but whereas those in Europe, North America, New Zealand and Japan had well organised groups and many hosts, those in South America, Africa, Indonesia and Caribbean Islands had few hosts, and communication with them was difficult owing to distances and unreliable postal services, while those in Eastern Europe presented political problems as well - and it was just in the South and the

Monday 29th December

7. At the opening, Pantini Vora, an Ashram sister, sang a devotional song, the meaning of which was "Give strength to my mind, O Lord, that I may do the right thing in the right spirit."
8. A statement having been presented by Emilia A. Boikliev, it was decided to recognise Servas Hungary as a branch of Servas International. Similar recognition was accorded to Yugoslavia, Zambia and Ghana.
9. Denise Waech, on behalf of the Treasurer Doris Bucher, presented an interim report, and said that accounts to the end of the year would be distributed later. Two auditors, Chris Kübler and Rolf Schweizer, both well qualified, were available from among the Swiss Servas hosts, and it was agreed that they be appointed. In reply to a question from the President, Denise explained that owing to circumstances beyond our control, not all groups are able to contribute the 20% of their income to the international fund. The 'travel pool' was started as an additional fund for the purpose of assistance with fares to international conferences, but money for these may be drawn from the general funds as well. References to 'fees' in the handbook were queried by the Israel secretary, who said that in his country the word 'contributions' would create fewer problems with the government. It was agreed to consider changing it when the handbook was revised.
10. It was agreed to add certain amendments to the Statutes, as follows:-
 - Statute 2: The address of the seat of the association is changed to that of Denise Waech, Ceresstrasse 23, CH-8008 Zürich, Switzerland.
 - Statute 5: For making immediate decisions, a working committee of Executive members should be formed, consisting of President, Vice-president, General Secretary, Treasurer and one Regional Co-ordinator appointed by the Executive Committee.
 - Statute 5: The full Executive Committee is extended to 15 members, to include all Regional Co-ordinators, with powers to co-opt.
 - Statute 5: Added to the sentence "It can also make decisions by correspondence" is "provided that all members of the Executive Committee are informed."
 - Statute 6: "Answers or views for decisions by correspondence shall be received within two months from the date the proposition is sent out, or they will become void." is added to the first paragraph.
11. It was agreed to amend certain parts of the Handbook as follows:-
 - page 5 - (III) should read "The governing body of Servas is the Executive Committee elected at the International Conference which meets every two years"....with, added at the end of the paragraph, "As far as possible, the decisions of the conference and the Executive Committee are binding on national groups."
 - page 8 - (to be added at the end of section 1)
 - "Day Hosts. For those who are not able to offer overnight accommodation, but who would like to help Servas travellers in other ways, e.g. with information, a guided tour, providing a meal, or just meeting for a friendly chat, it is possible to put their name and details on the host list as a 'Day Host'(column 1 of list)
 - page 10 -(para 3a), the words "United States" should be omitted.
 - page 14 -(para 7b), the words "Letters of Introduction" should be used instead of "Application forms".
 - (para 7a), add at the end "Travellers who require further lists during their journey should contact the appropriate national secretary and be prepared to pay the charges normal in that country."
 - (para 7c), add at the end, "An individual charge may be made for each host list, based on its size, and sufficient to cover the cost of production and postage".

Tuesday 30th December

12. A further amendment was agreed to the Handbook -- page 19 (para 4):
The section on Jamaica, which was out of date, should be deleted.
13. It was agreed to standardise the use of the Servas emblem on all forms and leaflets, and the format of the Letter of Introduction on the basis of the European one. Standardised travel request forms were accepted in the format recommended by the European conference of 1980, and symbols and abbreviations used in host lists were to be uniform.
14. With regard to incoming travellers, it was agreed that on page 14 of the Handbook, the second part of para 7b, from 'and the third copy..' onwards, should be deleted. It was agreed that the secretary of Servas Israel should be notified of travellers going to that country, and that in the case of any travellers approved outside their own country, a copy of their Letter of Introduction should be sent to their country of origin. Methods of discovering how many travellers visited each host were discussed, and no completely satisfactory one was found. Some groups felt that the statistics of incoming travellers were not worth the extra trouble of obtaining them.
15. It was agreed in principle to try to set up an office in London to assist Servas England, Scotland and Wales and some aspects of European co-ordination, and that the Handbook page 3 should be amended to read "Meeting financial commitments to Servas International insofar as possible, with a goal of 25% or more of traveller contributions, including the expenses for Regional Co-ordinators where necessary." To page 5, para.4, should be added "especially to help foster Servas in developing parts of the world", and in para.5, the amount of \$25 should be amended to \$50 for the sake of consistency. It was agreed that the Executive Committee should decide on the amount of contributions required from Servas International for the London office. It was suggested that Scandinavian fees and charges were excessively low, and that travellers should invariably be interviewed before approval; but after hearing explanations by Flemming Holm Larsen and Inger Amundsen, it was decided to give these questions further consideration at a later date.

Wednesday 31st December

16. Reports were presented by the parallel sessions holding discussions on the previous two days. They stressed the aims of peace and world unity, and recommended that travellers should be more conscientious about advance notice, work sharing, and discussion of peace issues. On host lists, the number of visitors a host has received should be included, and indication whether a host is willing to offer a longer stay than two days. (This is already done on several host lists.) Some wanted the 'Servas Passport' used in USA made universal, with the owner's photograph and life history included. Some felt that the trust hosts placed in travellers had a good influence on a community, and that these should be carefully approved; on the other hand, they were not in favour of rejecting applicants - it was better to risk sending a wrong traveller than turn down a good one. The parallel sessions also submitted the following suggestion: "In order to encourage membership from all economic classes, particularly to increase participation of lower income groups, the Handbook wording on page 7 might be amended, deleting 'providing some meals' and changing 'lodging' to 'shelter'; on page 13, reference to 'breakfast and evening meals' might be deleted, and 'provided' could be altered to 'offered', adding 'Any additional hospitality is at the discretion of the host.' It was hoped that time could be allowed later in the conference for discussion of these matters by the representatives' gathering.
17. Elections were held, voting by secret ballot, for the members of the Executive Committee to serve during 1981 and 1982, until the next conference. The results were announced as follows:

17 (continued)

President Graham Thomas (unopposed)

Vice-President Don Fawcett (14) Martha Simon (6) Merrilee Zellner (5)

General Secretary Barbara Whitehead (unopposed)

Assistant General Secretary Denise Waech (unopposed)

Peace Secretary Reva King (18) Hermann Buttonwieser (5)

Editor Servas International News Rosalind Schama (22)

Treasurer Denise Waech (19) John Goodey (4)

Regional Co-ordinators:

Africa Lydia Jones (22)

Southern Asia Harivallabh Parikh (unopposed)

Southeast Asia Kunio Tanaka (unopposed)

South Pacific Nan Smith (20) (subject to consent) John & Judy Ebner (2)

South America Jorge Zoppolo (Servas Uruguay) (unopposed)

North America & Caribbean Kay Lazarus (unopposed)

Europe and Near East Antonio Fried (unopposed)

18. The offer of Servas Israel to hold the next conference in their country was accepted, the dates to be decided between December 1982 or April 1983 by voting among all members. A provisional offer was made by Zambia for the following one in 1985.

19. It was agreed to support the Friends of Peace in Costa Rica for the establishment of a University of Peace there, and to offer publicity for the research and the U.N. Commission. Each group should be urged to write and offer support of this kind.

20. It was decided that as a memorial to Amano-san, an extra chapter should be written for the Servas history "Servas - the first 25 years" called "The Story of Amano-san". Emilia Boikliev suggested planting a tree at Anand Niketan in his memory, and this was done at the close of the conference.

21. A letter was read from Peter Berenson of England, founder of Amnesty International, about a new organisation 'Nevermore' which is dedicated to preventing a Third World War by bringing relief to victims of war, drought or earthquakes in areas of acute international tension. It is already at work in the Horn of Africa. It was agreed to support this new venture with publicity.

22. Further to Minute 16, a brief discussion took place, led by Gordon Roberts, on the amendments suggested by the parallel sessions. Luigi Uslenghi asked for longer stays with hosts and various offers of exchange services to be published in Servas International News and national newsletters, or on host lists, as is already done in Servas Italy. Prisca Molotsi strongly opposed the idea of limiting the hosts' provision to 'shelter', saying that in her country, sharing food was an essential part of hospitality.

23. It was agreed that Servas International News should appear quarterly and be distributed free to all hosts, and the new editor Rosalind Schama appealed for material from members to make it lively and interesting.

24. The Treasurer announced that the collection for a donation to the Ashram amounted to 8,500 rupees, and would be presented to Harivallabh Parikh at the farewell ceremony next day.
