

Rome, October 1, 1947

My dear friends:

The Salzburg Seminar was prolonged for me by the presence in Rome of many former fellowmembers and of other American friends. While Kenneth Lynn, the Lilenthals and the Geists already left for Paris, where they plan to spend the winter, the Kazins are still here. I am also trying to get my by now famous American friend from Stanford University to Naples, where he may spend a number of months in the Istituto di Studi Storici of Benedetto Croce, with a scholarship for which I suggested his name. I would thus reciprocate the courtesy he used with me in recommending my application to the Salzburg Seminar (there cannot be any equivocation about Mr. Delzell, you told his story and mine so many times to so many people!)

Looking back to this summer experience in Salzburg, as I have frequently done this month, I have very little to add to my extremely favourable appraisal of the whole business, as I tried to convey it to you in several talks in Salzburg and in the final plenary sessions of the Seminar. I am still of the opinion that the Seminar should preserve its character as an organization for advanced students, with a fairly mature scholarly experience and determined to pursue their studies in American culture in their own country. By recommending a further emphasis on specialization, as I did then, I was inevitably thinking of people like myself who would draw a lot of benefit out of a more concentrated and detailed kind of teaching as well as discussion. I am perfectly aware of the peculiar reasons which advised a broader treatment of the subject this year and am ready to admit that I learned a good deal myself.

On leaving Salzburg I was inclined to regard the cultural advantages I had derived from the Seminar as more concrete and satisfactory in character than what I had got in a more general human way. But now, in "recollecting my emotions in tranquillity", I realize that the fact of having made half a dozen very good friends out of a total of 150 is an extremely valuable acquisition, such as to more than balance the purely intellectual, scientific gains.

I won't dwell here upon my feeling of admiration and attachment for people like you who are, in the first instance, responsible for this successful initiative. Something of the celebrated "hopefulness" associated with the notion of America, a new hope and confidence in ourselves, was surely infused in all of us by living in daily touch with you and the other members of the Seminar. I was particularly inspired and infected, as it were, by the proposition which Clemens so aptly stressed, that you set out in your programme to demonstrate both to yourselves and to all of us, that it is still possible for private individuals to create something vital and lasting in a more and more State-dominated and Organization-ridden world. I am not revolting against the age of the common man, but only rejoicing at the possibility for the individual to escape the throttling compulsion of mass-irregimentation and complete successfully with sterilizing red-tape and officialdom! How stable and lasting this fragile and disarmed initiative will prove in the growingly explosive tangle of this atom-world, I don't know or care very much. It is better to be blown up while engaged in a constructive work than despondently wait for the explosion with our hands

in our lap.

As to the community life in Salzburg? I who am a rather thoreauish and solitary man, got adjusted to it pretty well. Honestly, I would have preferred to have fewer people around myself, in order to get to know them better and not to disperse my limited abilities for human intercourse. Please do not take it amiss, but I want to be utterly frank and I think that by being so I may help you better in getting you to evaluating the different genuine reactions to this year experiment. The food was unfortunately bad for me, but I only am to blame, as I suffer from a stomach ulcer and therefore cannot expect to have a special diet arranged for me. A little more milk and fresh fruit, and a little less cucumber and onions would have pleased me very much.

Still, all these minor drawbacks lost almost completely their weight when I gave a lecture, a few days ago, on the Salzburg Seminar, to a group of University students hospitalized in the Forlanini Sanatorium in Rome. Maybe the obvious comparison between my and their physical conditions or the detachment with which I could look back to the cucumbers and co., helped me to give an unqualified enthusiastic account of the Seminar, which apparently proved quite a success and caused the unfortunate young men to ask me to give them more information about the whole thing. I may also write more at length on the Seminar in an Italian periodical "Mondo Europeo", whose editor is a friend of mine and is interested particularly in the academic side of the Seminar itself. The two articles which I enclose, in addition to containing many misprints, are very sketchy and journalistic but I hope you will appreciate the grateful and friendly spirit informing them. I expect my friend Franci Cingano, from Padua, will send you his article on the Seminar, published on La Voce Repubblicana a few days after mine. I will continue to watch out for anything else which may appear on the Seminar and keep you informed.

I have not three very tentative suggestions to offer for next year: what would you think of a Seminar in law and judicial institutions to be held in Italy or elsewhere? A friend of mine, a judge himself, believes that it might prove extremely interesting and useful. It might cover the field of trials in the different European countries, their respective procedures, the prison-system and so on. According to my friend, this kind of Seminar should however include members endowed with a practical experience as judges or administrators in judicial bodies, which involves an older age and obviously different criteria of selection. In view of the often very wide differences among the various European and American countries in this field, the suggestion might be taken in consideration.

Secondly, 1948 will mark the centenary of what is regarded as a historical turning point in Europe: 1848, the year of revolutions, of national upheavals, in Italy, Poland, Belgium, France, and so on. Would it not be worth while to collect students from several European countries in a Seminar, sponsored by Harvard or any other American university, in order to discuss the subject, to see how the picture is changed today, how Europe is responding to the new urges of this century which make for internationalism but are still hampered and clogged by the persistence of other forces, historically progressive and liberating in 1848, although reactionary and dis-

ruptive today? I have not and am not able perhaps to think out in detail these hints, but you may be interested in considering them for what they are worth. Finally, in connection with what Clemens told me once, I have asked my brother, who is a Professor of Arabic in Rome University, to examine the possibility to hold a Seminar in Middle East here. I may sum up his conclusions as follows: A Seminar in the historical and political problems of the Near East might be held in Rome in the summer of 1948, with the backing of the Institute for the East and of the School for Oriental Studies of Rome university. The subjects for teaching might be: the political history of the Near East, both medieval and modern; moslem institutions; the contemporary history of the different eastern countries, from World War I to this afterwar period; a survey of their economic resources, of the ideal currents of contemporary Arabism and Islamism (modernism, nationalism, the Arab League, etc.), of modern neo-arabic literature, and so forth.

Professors of Rome University and other Italian scholars who have specialized in Eastern problems might participate in the teaching: for instance, Prof. Giorgio Levi Della Vida, who is presently teaching in the University of Philadelphia (and might be consulted about this plan), Prof. Ettore Rossi, who is teaching Turkish in Rome University, Prof. Francesco Gabrieli, who teaches Arabic in the same university, Prof. Virginia Vacca and Prof. Veccia Vaglieri of the Eastern Institute, Naples. Some of these teachers might lecture in English (Levi Della Vida, Vacca), others in French.

The scientific purpose of this Seminar would be to provide young European students with a first-hand knowledge of the contemporary Arab-Islamic world, of its political and spiritual trends, of its relations with the Western World and its ideologies. The teaching would obviously be based upon a historical basis and would exclude any kind of superficial journalistic treatment.

If the idea should prove agreeable, the programme might be worked out in detail.

So much for what I hope you will not regard as unpracticable suggestions. As you know, I have no knack for organization and am simply appalled at the idea of having to carry into execution any part of the above-mentioned plans. I have not yet decided what I shall do next year. I may apply for a scholarship in the States, in order to carry on with my work about the American and British radical thinking in the last decades of the XVIIIth and the first ones of the XIXth century. At any rate, as I already told you, you can rely upon my cooperation and guidance as far as my abilities and Italian affairs are concerned.

I reciprocate your wishes for a good winter and hope to hear from you from time to time.

Yours very sincerely and affectionately,

Vittori Gabrieli