

I met Frank Davidson in the late 1970s, at a Meeting of the AAAS where he introduced me to the concept of 'macro-engineering', about which he contributed an excellent Comment in 1984. [See Title 327] I liked Frank from the beginning, because of his wide interdisciplinary spirit, although, or perhaps because, he had trained and worked as a lawyer in New York. When I met him he was lecturing about, and researching in, the Macro-engineering Research Group of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, living half the year in Concord, Massachusetts, and the other half in Paris. His outlook on life could not have been more international.

As our friendship grew during frequent meetings on both continents, I asked him to join the Editorial Board of ISR, and in 1988 he contributed another Comment, analysing the Club of Rome's problématique from a deep engineering and political-diplomatic point of view. He concluded that only the foundation of a School, devoted to teaching engineering to diplomats, and to instructing engineers in the finesse of diplomacy, could correct the present inability of decision-makers to apply available macro-engineering solutions to the great problems of the world. This was the legacy of Lesseps, the diplomat, who created the greatest engineering achievement of the 19th century, the Suez Canal.

Like Frank Davidson, I have always admired this great engineering feat of the Suez Canal, whether I travelled by ship to and from Australia or on that unique occasion on 16 November 1973 when I crossed the Canal in an Israeli military transport carrier over a temporary Bailey Bridge, while a section of the Suez Canal was occupied for a short time by the Israeli Army.

A Post-Graduate Academy for Engineers and Diplomats would have a plethora of past, present and future potential subjects to deepen and broaden the perception of its students, wrote Davidson. He mentioned a few, like the recurrent droughts of the Sahel, the building of artificial islands perfected by the Japanese, a world-wide electricity network, a planetary water supply grid and supersonic transport through vacuum tubes underneath the Atlantic Ocean.

The technology for these projects is now, or will shortly be available, according to Davidson. Is our era really incapable of moving beyond conferences and casual alms-giving to groups desperately in need of rehabilitation and re-establishment, when engineering on a grand scale, *les grands travaux*, could contribute so much? To adapt diplomacy to the requirements of engineering was highlighted in this Comment by the educational dimensions of the task, possible perhaps through Nakajima's Global Infrastructure Fund.