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# **The evolution of the Committee for Conflict Transformation Support, 1992-2006**

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# The evolution of the Committee for Conflict Transformation Support, 1992-2006

The Committee for Conflict Transformation Support (CCTS) has now existed for 14 years as a place for cooperation and reflection between organisations and some freelance practitioners working to transform social conflicts. It has evolved from having a short-term objective primarily concerned with the conflicts in East and Central Europe to becoming a long-standing body whose members, working in different situations and with different emphases, share their insights and understanding, organising periodic seminars on the issues that confront those working for conflict transformation around the world.

Since the end of the Cold War, and the escalation into war of many social conflicts around the world, there has been an enormous expansion in the number of organisations that include conflict resolution in their brief, the number of books written on the subject, and the amount of funds devoted to related activities. Since 1992, the Committee for Conflict Transformation Support has been one of the few places where - with considerable continuity - a range of organisations and practitioners have taken the space to share their dilemmas, in some cases their excitement and in some their cases their disappointment, as they reflect on their work and on developments in the field.

The focus of this study is primarily the organisational evolution of the Committee and the issues raised in its internal meetings. It is beyond the scope of this report to consider the activities in which Committee members have engaged and how they have contributed to the development of peace-building strategies in various situations. The various day seminars and workshops of the Committee are reported fully and publicly in the *CCTS Newsletter* (latterly entitled *CCTS Review*). They are listed in Appendix I, but in general are not more fully discussed in this report. They can be found, together with other issues of the Newsletter/Review, from 1995 to the present, at [http: www.c-r.org/ccts/](http://www.c-r.org/ccts/)

In preparing this report, I have re-read nearly all the Committee minutes from 1992 until the present day, and have drawn on my own memory - especially of the first five years of the Committee, when I was its Treasurer. For most of its history, the Committee's minutes have been assiduously taken by Michael Randle and now provide an excellent record.<sup>1</sup> These minutes are confidential, and therefore I have avoided identifying speakers except when this is already a matter of public record. The Committee will shortly be addressing the issue of archiving its minutes and making them available to other researchers.

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1 I wish to thank Michael Randle, Clem McCartney and Juliet Williams for providing me with the minutes and other internal documents.

# 1. The formation of the Committee

The Committee for Conflict Transformation Support was formed in 1992, operating until 1997 under the name Coordinating Committee for Conflict Resolution Training in Europe. It was a response to a growing demand for conflict resolution training in the “post-Communist” countries of East and Central Europe, and saw its project as being to multiply the number of trainers in that region.

The Committee was conceived at the second Helsinki Citizens Assembly in Bratislava (then still part of Czechoslovakia) in March 1992. Peace groups in Slovenia and Croatia had recently accused the HCA of unwillingness to listen to them and those Slovenes who had been the first Yugoslavs involved in the HCA process decided to withdraw completely, to boycott Bratislava, and to denounce the HCA process as being manipulated by self-appointed spokespeople usurping the name of “civil society”. The Croatian peace groups had much less history with the HCA process and now decided to participate in a constructive effort to channel the goodwill of Western civil society activists. The coordinator of the Anti-War Campaign of Croatia (ARK), Vesna Teršelič, had accepted the invitation to speak in a session on “demilitarisation and peace politics”. UN “blue helmets” would soon be arriving in Croatia, but their role would be peace-keeping, not peace-building. Vesna identified needs for “peace culture education” and training skills for those trying to build strong centres for nonviolent change. A speaker from the Moscow group Memorial spoke of similar needs in the Transcaucasus. In a later session on mediation, participants from East and Central Europe responded with enthusiasm when Adam Curle proposed establishing a network for training in mediation and related skills.

Among other participants in that HCA were staff and representatives of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFoR), Peace Brigades International (PBI), Quaker Peace and Service (referred to in this study by its current acronym QPSW<sup>2</sup>), War Resisters' International (WRI), Responding to Conflict (RTC) and the Centre for Conflict Resolution at the Bradford University Department of Peace Studies. On returning to London, Adam convened a meeting with representatives of these bodies (in most cases, inviting the director or nearest equivalent) to see how to proceed. This meeting decided to form a Committee composed of a mixture of representatives of member organisations, plus some trainers in conflict resolution. The main goal would be to rapidly multiply the number of local trainers in conflict resolution from the countries of East and Central Europe ready to respond to the rising ethnic tensions in the region. This was a goal beyond the immediate capacity of any one of the founding organisations of the Committee, and which they agreed would be better pursued cooperatively rather than with single organisations trying to raise their own funds to pursue projects without any reference to other work in the region. The background of controversy concerning the HCA reinforced the existing

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2 Quaker Peace and Social Witness

inclination of the groups represented to emphasise the importance of listening to local peace or human rights activists.

Initially, part of the concept of the Committee was to play an international coordinating role. Therefore an effort was made to maintain contact with counterparts in other countries. In recognition of the potential value of the Helsinki Citizens Assembly, European Dialogue - the HCA's British branch (the successor organisation to END, European Nuclear Disarmament) - was invited to attend while the HCA secretariat in Prague and various other people outside Britain involved in the HCA's Peace and Demilitarisation Commission were to be kept informed.

Adam had the ear of two Quaker trusts - the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Polden Puckham Charitable Foundation - who readily allocated funding and an administrative office was set up, initially in Bradford. The original idea was for the Committee to have a short life – 18 months – and then to disband. However, the very first time the Committee was involved in organising a visit to Osijek, Croatia, this changed.

## **2. CCCRTE's programme of work in former-Yugoslavia**

Osijek had been one of the Croatian towns most heavily bombarded during the 1991-92 war with Serbia. Moreover it bordered a UN Protected Area - a territory claimed by Croatia but from which most Croats had been expelled or fled in 1991 and which was from 1992 onwards administered as part of the Serbian Republic of Krajina. In response to the new situation, an Osijek peace group formed - the Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Nonviolence - and affiliated to ARK.

The Osijek group were already engaged in human rights work, but saw a more complex role for themselves and appealed for training in nonviolent conflict resolution. The situation they were facing was that Osijek was in effect run by a hard-line and corrupt Croatian nationalist "warlord", Glavas, whose supporters included a militant association of Croats displaced from East Slavonia. Moreover, in violation of the peace accords and the conditions for recognition of Croatian independence, the Osijek local authorities (as elsewhere in Croatia), far from honouring residual responsibilities from the Yugoslav federation, were practising ethnic discrimination against Serbs. In particular, they were abusing their control of social housing to evict Serbs and at times people of other nationalities, including some Croats, and to install "patriotic" Croats. When activists from Osijek peace group intervened by "flat-sitting" to prevent the evictions, they too were threatened both physically and with other reprisals, such as loss of jobs.

The first CCCRTE members to go to Osijek – Adam Curle, Judith Large of Responding to

Conflict, and Nick Lewer of Bradford Department of Peace Studies - could see that the Centre had been started by strong, able and brave people who did not need training as much as various other forms of support: moral support, financial support, at times a visible link to the world beyond Croatia, at times quiet advice. The Committee itself decided to “accompany” Osijek, through responding to any request for a visit, through phone support, through contacts with particular forms of expertise. This, the Committee anticipated, would be an important learning situation.

The Committee's first formal “mission statement” was the following:

*The CCCRTE was established to increase the number of people available in many areas to offer training in nonviolent responses to conflict, including mediation. The work has three facets: exploring methods of the training in the sort of context in which it is to be applied; supporting the local peace groups involved; and training individual members of these groups. The work undertaken thus far in former Yugoslavia will serve as a model for new work elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe.*

The fact that this was not drafted until June 1993, at a special two-day meeting reflecting on more than a year of the Committee's activity, indicated that already the original 18 months time frame was seen as unrealistic. Also, the absence of reference to the Helsinki Citizens Assembly can be read as evidence of its receding relevance to the Committee.

In a report written shortly after this meeting, Judith Large described the Committee's approach as “needs-based” - which meant, in particular, depending on local groups to define those needs and to invite outside involvement. Osijek was the priority and received most concentrated attention, but CCCRTE saw itself as having a networking function which entailed following the development of training throughout the region - often with people linked to the committee going to other areas.

“Support for local peace groups” could take many forms. In view of the threats to activists at the Centre, Adam Curle suggested that PBI should consider mounting an accompaniment project. PBI – at that time a participant in the Committee – sent an exploratory team but they found that the Osijek centre wanted a much wider type of accompaniment than PBI had ever offered.

The issue of “war trauma” soon demanded attention. Adam Curle observed the power of violence to “distort perceptions”, generating further distrust and hostility. Therefore he arranged for someone with relevant expertise to visit Osijek. Meanwhile War Resisters' International, for its part, arranged a tour by Greg Payton, a US veteran of the Vietnam war, who visited Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia to meet veterans of the recent wars. So soon after two wars, and with the longer war in Bosnia now under way, Greg found most veterans “in denial” - resentful at the lack of compensation for their suffering, but loyal to their political leaders.

Part of “peace culture”, according to ARK, was human rights education and so ARK in Zagreb requested the Committee to part-finance a protracted visit to Croatia from Tony Smythe. One of the first British peace activists to warn of the danger of war in Yugoslavia (when he was director of the British branch of IPPNW), Tony had previously directed the National Council of Civil Liberties, MIND and Shelter, in all of which he had made a central point of educating people about their rights and how they could restrain abuses by officialdom. (His stay in Croatia was also part-financed by the Lansbury House Trust Fund, and coincided with Osijek's International Peace Week in summer 1993.)

The CCCRTE was dealing with a new situation. The end of the Cold War was meant to herald a “peace dividend”, a turn away from military force. Western states, foundations and corporations were offering funding and training to support the populations of the former Communist states of Europe in making the transition to a market economy with multi-party electoral democracy. Yet here in Europe a multi-national state was breaking up in a series of vicious wars. Important sections of the civil populations of all these nations – albeit only a minority from Serbia - were demanding international involvement, while the geographical accessibility of the former-Yugoslavia meant that a multitude of private and non-military responses were possible. ARK was particularly adept at harnessing goodwill, initiating projects for international volunteers such as Suncokret (Sunflower) working with refugees and later the Pakrac reconstruction project in a divided West Slavonia town. (CCCRTE was later to provide a small amount of seed money for Nick Wilson to begin his study of Pakrac as “prototype peace-building”.)

Coupled with the post-Communist hunger to learn from “the West”, including the Western peace movement, and with the pressure some organisations felt from their home constituencies to be seen to be responding to events there, the countries of the former Yugoslavia became the site for a host of workshops on themes connected in one way or another with nonviolence and conflict. Local activists seemed to enjoy workshops, but what impact were they having and how were they addressing the needs of the situation?

Visitors to former-Yugoslavia would sometimes hear sceptical comments - sometimes about the form of training and sometimes about the trainers personally. “What has encouraging refugee children to scream got to do with conflict resolution?” was a remark reported from a Committee contact in the region alarmed by a particular form of workshop. “Anti-intellectual” was quite a common comment, and it was clear that the people who went to intellectual conferences on the macro issues of conflict did not usually attend training workshops that focused more on the everyday, even micro, level. Also, the factor of gender was clearly at work there, academic conferences generally having an over-representation of men while more women than men were attracted to workshops.

The Committee also had some doubts about what some visiting trainers had to offer. The local groups tended simply to trust a visiting facilitator to be competent - yet some self-invited “trainers” could be criticised for being conflict “entrepreneurs”, people working by

themselves, without accountability, and without any sort of accreditation. In June 1993 (at the same meeting for reflection that drafted the first mission statement), the Committee addressed the issue of quality of trainings done in its name:

*It will be important to maintain a consistent approach in the work and to see that we offer support which really meets the needs of groups; therefore we must find ways of ensuring (assuring?) the quality of training being done in our name. One such way would be to use a system of apprenticeship, with an experienced trainer taking as co-worker someone new to a particular situation. ... We need to evolve a clear system of accountability of work done.*

By this time, a small group was already at work preparing a meeting to evaluate the training in former-Yugoslavia. In line with the philosophy of responding to the needs of those in the situation, what was desired was a participatory evaluation where visiting facilitators came together with local peace activists who had attended workshops. This event took place in Budapest in November 1993, with participants from Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia and Vojvodina, and with trainers from several countries – including some not directly connected with the CCCRTE.

The event gave feedback on some of the methodology and usefully raised certain issues of cultural sensitivity for trainers. As nearly all the participants from the region were women, the event also raised a gender issue about peacework and in particular about training workshops. However, perhaps the most significant finding was that what the local participants had most valued could be considered side-effects of the training. Sometimes it was the mere fact that a visit from a foreign facilitator provided the occasion for a meeting or gave them more confidence to use the skills they already had. More often, however, it was that the presence of a foreigner who so obviously cared about their situation, and was looking for nonviolent paths to develop, encouraged them in swimming against the social tide of exclusivist nationalism. Empathy was a highly valued quality.

The concluding evaluation of the event itself was very positive. Being a joint evaluation made it innovative, as Judith Large later commented in her book *The War Next Door*<sup>3</sup>, an evaluation shaped by the desires and expectations of the participants as much as by the Committee, and involving the “recipients” of training in facilitation. Inherent in this event had been an element of skill-sharing and it was agreed to organise a follow-up that would be not an evaluation but rather “an exchange meeting”. This became an event, organised primarily by IFoR in conjunction with trainers from the former-Yugoslavia, that took place in Schlaining, Austria, 16 months later in March 1995.

Another exchange project that took shape in Budapest was for a study trip to Northern Ireland by peaceworkers from the successor states of former-Yugoslavia. Eight

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3 Judith Large, *The War Next Door: A Study of Second-Track Interventions During the War in Ex-Yugoslavia* (Hawthorn Press, 1998), p99

peaceworkers from former-Yugoslavia visited Northern Ireland for 11 days in February-March 1995, Clem McCartney on behalf of CCCRTE raising the additional funds and organising the programme in Northern Ireland.

The Committee's role in the Schlaining Exchange Meeting was much more "hands-off" than in Budapest, and indeed only one regular CCCRTE member attended - the Committee's new chair, Diana Francis. Again most participants evaluated positively, but Diana's report sounded a more critical note. She was surprised that the event "was very much focused on individual psychological impulses and needs". "Burn-out" - an issue raised in the earlier meeting in Budapest - was now high on the agenda. Commented Diana, "this time together was addressing not just the question but the fact of burn-out". The groups participating were working hard and courageously in situations where they lacked political leverage. Diana recognised the need to provide space for people to express their "inner pain" and that "their own individual experience is the most natural - and arguably the most important - place to start; and starting there fulfils an immediate personal need". However, she feared "some of the training packages most favoured and represented at this exchange meeting are, if they stand alone, over-simple and inadequate in offering or encouraging a realistic and rounded response to conflict at the interpersonal level, let alone the social or the political".

This last comment referred in particular to "nonviolent communication". On the Exchange Meeting agenda, this term was used interchangeably with "nonviolent conflict resolution", regardless of the fact that nonviolent communication is a specific training package based on the work of Marshall Rosenberg. CCCRTE never publicly criticised any particular training package - people choose what works for them - but there was dissatisfaction in the Committee that this one approach should have dominated the Exchange Meeting.

By the time of the Exchange Meeting, Bosnia had been at war for two years, while the Croatian Army was about to mount Operation Flash, which abruptly ended the pioneer peace-building project at Pakrac. Later that year Operation Storm "reconquered" the area around Knin. It was a hard time for peace groups.

A couple of years later, a Committee member retrospectively suggested that the Committee had not been critical enough about the Budapest or Schlaining events. "[The Exchange Meeting in] Schlaining was important", he observed, "but mainly as a means for people to become recharged. But we need to acknowledge that this was not what we originally intended. It was all too easy ... to be positive about certain outcomes without thinking through what might have been." Diana was self-critical for not challenging the over-personal approaches but rather "going with the flow" in the name of "respecting expressed needs of our friends", and so drew out an important qualification to the Committee's "needs-based" approach. Yes, supportive outsiders should take their lead from the local peace activists. However, at times their responsibility is to make honest and

uncomfortable observations. Judging when and how this is appropriate is one of the questions repeatedly addressed in the CCCRTE/CCTS newsround.

### **3. The early internal functioning of the Committee**

Up to the Schlaining Exchange Meeting, CCCRTE had primarily dedicated itself to responding to the conflict in the former-Yugoslavia. Committee meetings would be a place for exchange of information and opinions. The Committee itself comprised a mixture of organisational representatives and “practitioners”. The membership was already shifting - some organisations (International Alert and later Conciliation Resources) joining and some dropping out (Bradford University Centre for Conflict Resolution - part of the Department of Peace Studies - and PBI). The secretariat moved from Bradford to Judith Large and, when she had a serious accident, to IFoR in the Netherlands where it stayed until 2000 when Conciliation Resources took over.

The Committee had various discussions about “accrediting” trainers, and systems of apprenticeship or supervision. Some of these ideas were introduced into projects involving Committee members, but the Committee itself lacked organisational capacity - having neither the staff nor the finances - to mount major projects. By the time of the Schlaining Exchange Meeting (March 1995), the Committee was clear that - while it would still respond to specific requests from Serbia and Croatia - there were sufficient trainers there to respond to any requests for introductory workshops. The amount of work in the region required of the Committee as such had declined. In view of the Dayton and Erdut agreements of November 1995, some increase in demand was expected in Bosnia-Herzegovina and East Slavonia (the territories affected by the agreements), and perhaps there would also be more in relation to Kosovo and Macedonia. However, with or without the Committee, plenty of work was afoot in the territories of former-Yugoslavia to multiply the number of trainers, not just in conflict resolution but in organisational development, human rights education, psychosocial work, and other capacities. At the same time, possibilities for new CCCRTE involvement in another region - the North Caucasus - were not likely to become as central a focus for the Committee. A three-person exploratory team had visited the area on behalf of QPSW and CCCRTE in 1995, but the follow-up work was expected to fall largely on member organisations, initially International Alert and QPSW.

The Committee did not set out to become an organisation of its own. Nevertheless the 1995 application to the Committee's two funders did ask for an increase level of funding so that the Committee would have greater capacity to develop more of its own projects. The proposed budget therefore made some provision for paying fees for project work. The funders were not persuaded, but they continued to see the value of the Committee's

networking role and maintained their grants at the previous level. This funding was sufficient to meet basic administrative costs and to cover some project expenses for people travelling to the field, but was not enough for the Committee to offer regular fees to freelance practitioners.

The Committee itself in turn received various requests for money, and had enough to pay expenses, such as fares to the successor states of Yugoslavia countries or sometimes to meetings useful for networking, but not honorariums or fees. With the exception of work related to Osijek, the procedure agreed by the Committee before funding an international visit to former-Yugoslavia was to ask to see a written invitation from a local group there. At this time there were numerous warning stories about western “peaceworkers” who felt the call to go to former-Yugoslavia and then simply showed up, demanding attention from local activists. There was a tendency to think that such people should rather avail themselves of the many structured opportunities to do voluntary work in the region, either in placements with various peace groups or with bodies such as Suncokret, the Pakrac reconstruction project and the ventures it later inspired in Bosnia, plus various schemes in which Committee members were involved. WRI and IFoR were central organisations in an international project, the Balkan Peace Team, sending international volunteers to Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo, while QPSW had its own schemes to place volunteers with peace groups and also later joined the BPT.

In view of the importance of Osijek in this early history of the Committee, it is worth recognising the continuing development of peace initiatives that originated in the work of the Centre of Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights in Osijek. The Centre can be considered a womb giving birth to a variety of programmes, some of which are especially well documented. See, for instance, *I Choose Life: Post-War Peace Building in Eastern Croatia* (edited by Katarina Kruhonja and published by the Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights in 2001), which documents the formation of nine village-based peace teams in the region.

## 4. Role review

By the end of 1995, the time had come for a review of the Committee's role and to this end Diana Francis and David Lord of Conciliation Resources drew up a structured list of the Committee's activities and intentions in an attempt to give them more framework. Here it is, from the 16 January 1996 minutes of the Committee:

*Purposes:*

- 1. Help provide means of increasing the number of people able to cope with conflict and help others to do so.*
- 2. Networking.*

3. *Help pool resources.*
4. *Provide a forum for deepening an understanding of conflict resolution and how to be effective in offering this kind of support.*

*Functions:*

1. *To provide a broad menu of conflict resolution training.*
2. *To provide support, including moral and psychological support, and to facilitate group processing, and advocacy.*
3. *To assist people looking for funding, for instance by putting them in touch with possible funders. (However, the Committee itself was not a grant-making body.)*
4. *To meet regularly.*
5. *To coordinate.*
6. *To be a forum for the exchange of ideas.*
7. *To disseminate information about our activities and those of others.*

*Some of the types of training already offered by members:*

1. *Nonviolent action training*
2. *Group process training*
3. *Listening project*
4. *Training for building a culture of human rights*
5. *Alternatives to violence training*
6. *Psychological/sociological counselling*
7. *Problem-solving workshops*
8. *Action planning/self-help*
9. *Conflict analysis and mapping*
10. *Communication skills*
11. *Gender awareness*
12. *Participative evaluation*
13. *Alternative dispute resolution*
14. *Exploring prejudice and identity*
15. *Communications training in conflict zones*
16. *Inclusive problem solving*
17. *Handling anger*
18. *Negotiation and mediation skills*
19. *Analysis and strategies for nonviolent action*
20. *Needs and fears mapping*
21. *Social/personal recovery and healing*
22. *Group facilitation*
23. *Policy planning*
24. *Systems analysis*
25. *Training of trainers*
26. *Peer assessment and self-assessment*

*Types of support:*  
*Various types of training*  
*advocacy*  
*listening and framing*  
*affirmation of people and their activities*  
*skills development*  
*information sharing*  
*diagnostics - matching needs to resources*  
*clarifying group aims and processes*  
*evaluation*  
*empowerment for social action*

The work in which Committee members were engaged had moved on. The groups in former-Yugoslavia, it was noted, “had moved on a stage from doing their conflict resolution workshops. They were involved in hands-on work ... What they mainly wanted now were people with whom to discuss and reflect upon the shape and direction of their projects. It was consultancy work, more than training”. Indeed, in general, a number of Committee members were now as likely to be involved in consultancy or in external evaluation as in facilitating workshops.

Also, the membership of the Committee had itself changed. Stalwart peace organisations with decades of work behind them - IFoR, WRI and QPSW - were joined by NGOs established comparatively recently, that were more project-based, first International Alert and then Conciliation Resources. The relationship with the Birmingham-based training centre, Responding to Conflict, tended to depend on personal involvement - for instance weakening when Judith Large left RTC and regaining strength through Paul Clifford's involvement as an associate.

An internal role that the Committee had been playing almost incidentally - that of being a forum - now took on more importance, responding to the members' own need for reflection. This was only to be expected in view of the rapid growth of the conflict resolution/peacebuilding “sector” in the 1990s and the many challenges it faced. Furthermore, as Committee meetings increasingly centred on these reflections, a need was seen for “dissemination” of the insights they yielded. Therefore in 1995 The Committee began producing a newsletter, initially called *Network News*, and then in 1996 it began to organise day seminars open to participants outside the Committee. In this way, the Committee hoped to strengthen the forum role, making its reflections more visible and including more people in the interchange.

The very first day seminar - on evaluation - illustrates the Committee's desire to have an impact on the environment in which peace organisations operate. In the 1990s, funders had become more conscious of their need for evaluation, but some were imposing quantitative models. Evaluating conflict resolution is more complicated than evaluating

the distribution of humanitarian relief. The results tend to be less tangible, a “success” might be no more than opening a fragile possibility that is then never realised. The immediate evaluation of a workshop is likely to focus on its internal process and content. However, the “good vibes” generated within a workshop can be a misleading yardstick, excluding questions of who the workshop reached and where it would lead. Even more difficult to gauge is the external impact of a workshop, especially as it is likely to be one component of a programme. Statistics are not necessarily useful “indicators” - “x people were trained who then themselves went on to organise y number of workshops in z locations” leaves a number of essential questions unasked. The day seminar on evaluation attempted to involve funders together with practitioners from a range of agencies in addressing the issues, and benefited from the participation of a civil servant from the Department for International Development (DfID).

It touched on a central theme and has proved in the years since to be an important point of reference for many of its participants. Indeed, even in the Committee minutes of 2005, there are allusions to points made in that day seminar.

Fundraising manuals usually emphasise the importance of educating funders and potential funders about the issues on which you are working. However, the Committee's desire to engage with policy makers went further than that, and was a sign of widening of focus. The initial concentration on support for peace groups and peace activists had now expanded to an approach looking more at multi-levelled and multi-layered peace processes. These focuses are not contradictory and are bridged by John Paul Lederach's valuable concept of consolidating a “peace constituency” within any given situation, but the mode of operation had changed. Committee members were often invited to a conflict zone not by existing peace groups but by other agencies, and the attitude on the question of invitations changed. In 1999 one Committee member wanted to “flag hesitation” on the issue, now doubting their own previously “prissy, politically correct, wait-till-somebody-asks-you position”.

As the Committee's role evolved, it was only a matter of time before its cumbersome name was dropped. In 1997 the CCCRTE became the Committee for Conflict Transformation (still rather a mouthful!):

- a. dropping the term *Coordinating*. The Committee would continue to network internationally, working with practitioners from other countries and attending meetings, but making no pretensions to being a Europe-wide coordination.
- b. preferring the more far-reaching conflict *transformation*. There is not necessarily any incompatibility between the terms conflict transformation and conflict resolution - transforming a conflict is the ideal form of resolution. However, the terms tend to have different associations: “transformation” suggests addressing root causes, including issues of power, justice and long-term structural change, while “resolution” is likely to be linked

more with looking for an agreement between conflicting parties.

c. ending the limitation about working in *Europe*. Committee members were working in every continent and increasingly what they learnt outside Europe was being brought to the discussion table.

From this time onwards, the Committee rarely engaged as a Committee in work outside Britain. Sometimes Committee members would combine in field projects - an organisation contracting a consultant, or two organisations cooperating - but the general pattern became to treat project work as something carried out by Committee members, with the role of the Committee being to share what was learnt. First, to share, and second to raise issues for wider discussion.

## **5. A space for reflection and interchange**

After this review of its role, the Committee put more effort into disseminating what it was learning - through a *Newsletter* circulated internationally well beyond Committee members, and through day seminars addressing some of the critical issues that the Committee's discussions were identifying. However, at the core of the Committee's activity, was its function as a space for reflection and interchange between people concerned with conflict transformation.

This is where Committee members bring the issues they are grappling with, and the insights they are gaining. Various topics have surfaced repeatedly, and a number of them have been addressed in the day seminars or issues of the Committee's *Newsletter* (now *Review*). See Appendix I for a list of the titles of the CCTS day workshops or seminars. However, the general feeling in the Committee meetings is that the quality of discussion in these events - although usually prepared by a written paper and a plan of facilitation - does not often match that in the Committee itself.

The pattern of Committee meetings in recent years tends to be spending the first two hours or so in a "newsround" where members share information and thoughts about their work. The distinct ways of working of the organisations at times offers complementary viewpoints. While a number of organisations have been sporadically active in the Committee, the following have been core member groups:

Quaker Peace and Social Witness exists to enhance the peace work of the Society of Friends (Quakers). It frequently appoints "representatives" to work in areas of particular concern, and organises various forms of support for peace projects - including sending volunteers or offering funds. A number of people connected with QPSW, including freelance practitioners, have attended meetings, but the regular representation of QPSW

has usually been carried by the coordinator of its Balkans programme.

The pacifist internationals - the multi-faith International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the secular War Resisters' International - were founded after the First World War and are primarily networks of like-minded groups and individuals. Their principal function has been to connect pacifists around the world, welcoming new contacts into the community of those committed to nonviolence. In addition, they have had projects of special interest to the Committee, such as the Balkan Peace Team (1993-2001), the IFoR Women's Peacemaker Programme, and WRI's programme Dealing with the Past. Their involvement in the Committee has diminished in recent years.

Responding to Conflict is a training centre that attracts staff and students already involved in working with conflict and who later often go on to work with other organisations or as consultants. From time to time, RTC also mounts international training projects in other countries. Similarly, the Coventry University Centre for Peace and Reconciliation Studies runs MA and distance learning courses that attract students working on conflict in their own situations, while also encouraging research into conflict transformation.

Conciliation Resources grew out of International Alert and both combine a thematic approach to issues, through their publications and consultations, with project work in particular conflict zones. These organisations tend to have more contact with relevant governmental departments, especially the Department for International Development (DfID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). Conciliation Resources, as well as hosting most of the Committee meetings, providing web space and serving as secretariat for the Committee since 2000, often has two representatives at the meeting and in general has invested considerable effort in the Committee's functioning.

PeaceDirect and St Ethelburga's are primarily concerned to educate the British public in order to mobilise support for peace work, especially innovative peace work, around the world.

It should also be recognised that individuals might wear more than one "hat" in this sort of coordination: changing jobs while maintaining their participation, or representing an organisation while also being a consultant. Many individuals attending meetings have been members, "attenders" or employees of the Society of Friends. Indeed, initially some participants experienced something of a Quaker domination of the Committee, especially in view of the prior existence of a strong network of Quakers working in conflict resolution. Subsequently, membership of the Committee became more diverse.

The newsround offers a meeting place for these distinct but cooperative groups. The discussions that arise spontaneously are then grounded in the particularity of a specific context and experience. In contrast, the authors of papers for the CCTS day events tend to provide a more scholarly approach, balancing their sharpest insights with different,

sometimes counter-examples, and seeking to delineate both commonalities and differences.

## 6. Recurring themes

The remainder of this study is devoted to discussion of the recurring themes arising from the Committee's newsround. Some of these have been treated at more length in day seminars - the reports of those discussions are publicly available on the Committee website. Here I focus more on the discussions arising from the "newsround" and refer only in passing to the day seminars.

### *Dealing with the past*

The issue of "dealing with the past" has surfaced repeatedly throughout the Committee's history in various guises and has been the subject of one day seminar, with additional articles in the *CCTS Review*. Moreover, there is considerable expertise in the Committee - some members have written and lectured about it, others have prepared programmes of work connected with it - and there are quite strong opinions and differences of emphasis.

Within the Committee minutes a variety of related elements have emerged at different times:

- the need to make space for inner pain, the need for justice in a durable peace,
- the transforming power of forgiveness,
- the need at times to let go and to shed the sense of victimhood,
- the importance of finding forms of healing and closure appropriate to a particular culture,
- the need to name specific guilty parties in order to exonerate a whole community from collective guilt,
- there being times when just a cessation of killing seems as much as you can hope for.

Whether from the angle of transitional or restorative justice, or from the trauma angle, Committee members have been able to point both to examples of good practice and to instances where those attempting to guide a process had not adequately addressed one aspect of dealing with the past. A training exercise devised by John Paul Lederach on "reconciliation" takes the poetry of Psalm 85 and explores the "meeting place" where Truth and Mercy meet together and Justice (or "righteousness" in the King James' version) and Peace kiss. These four elements each have their place.

This group exercise stimulates an exploration within the group that is far removed from simply reading about this in a book. Similarly the Committee's newsround brings a

freshness that some members have commented is sometimes lacking in the seminars.

The conclusions that emerge are not necessarily more exciting - for instance, on dealing with the past the Committee could agree, "we need to approach each context with analysis and intuition, feeling our way and applying what we have learnt". However, the interactive space of the Committee meeting and the confidence between its participants means that people dare to test out unformed or "heretical" ideas and to comment on changes in their own perceptions. Listening in a newsround to somebody talk about their actual work for peace in a specific situation can bring the excitement of discovery or recognition or engagement.

### *Frustration*

One function of safe space is to let members "sound off" about some of the frustrations of their work in a supportive atmosphere. Frustration goes with the territory. True, there are moments of satisfaction, and indeed inspiration, but most of the conflicts with which Committee members deal are protracted and indeed are often called "intractable". Any achievements tend to be small steps - and usually reversible ones at that. Trust-building, for instance, might be vulnerable to acts of violence even if these acts are carried out by groups without a strong social base. Or, as discussed in the seminar on the "the interplay between domestic and international forces", progress in working at the community level can be undermined by events "higher up".

Conflict transformation practitioners are emotionally affected by the work, and themselves can benefit from having a safe space to share some of the feelings that arise. Among aid workers, a phenomenon of "secondary trauma" has been identified and, whether or not this is the best label, witnessing horrors does have an impact on humanitarian workers.

Peacebuilders are expected - and even demand it of themselves - not just to show empathy but also to somehow bring optimism into the situation. In the face of repeated disappointment, they/we have to retain enough hope to continue looking for opportunities and untapped potentials for peace. Undoubtedly what keeps some Committee members going is the inspiration they derive from some of the special people they encounter in dire situations.

The most frequent source of frustration, on the other hand, is the attitude or behaviour of those who seem to have it in their power to do something about a conflict and yet do not - or do the wrong thing. These might be local actors and institutions, bigger agencies, officials and departments of the British government, or for the last five years the so-called "war against terror" that has had such disastrous effects for nonviolent responses to conflict.

At one meeting a Committee member protested that he had been working on a “frozen conflict” for 10 years. Attending an expert consultation on this conflict, he became very angry at the cynicism of discussion about the macro-level of conflict, ignoring the daily suffering caused to those living it.

### *Doubts and qualms*

The safe space provided by the Committee's newsround is not just for discussing frustrations, but also a place where members can bring dilemmas, doubts and qualms. The Committee's members share a number of general principles and yet applying them in a given context calls for judgement and timing.

One Committee member reported on facilitating a workshop for staff of an inter-governmental body about to be sent into a post-war conflict zone. The participants' career orientation and their lack of feeling for the conflict made a depressing contrast with courses for people living in the situation and, against the odds, working to change it.

In other situations, a facilitator is likely to find her/himself having to take risks, when workshops touch on explosive themes. One Committee member commented that “Sometimes workshops are almost a disaster. It might not be what funders want to hear but there are times when nobody can know if something will work out until we try it.”

Throughout a workshop a facilitator is asking her/himself questions. How much to challenge? What should be the balance between elicitive methodology and giving input? When to disclose and when to sit on your own views? And at the same time s/he needs to be checking her/his own cultural assumptions. One Committee member identified a persistent “conundrum”:

*... how to get people to bring things to the surface - things which needed to be dealt with but which they didn't altogether want to deal with. The facilitator has to decide how far to push and express those problems rather than go on keeping them hidden and denying them. [This Committee member's] feeling was that there could be no progress until this happened, but that that feeling itself reflected a personal and cultural assumption.*

In a wider context of developing programme and building a peace constituency, continual self-questioning and experimentation is part of the process. Peacebuilding, as Committee members have observed from time to time, is not a matter of technique, and facilitation itself is not a science: there are no guarantees of success. Committee members therefore value having each other as sounding boards.

When the work depends on negotiation - be that with local partners, authorities, other agencies of funding bodies - it is particularly valuable to have a place for reflection. What trade-offs were necessary? Did they affect the essence of what a project was trying to do?

Within their own organisations, external pressures often mean that such discussions might have to be cut short in order to take a practical decision, whereas the Committee's newsround welcomes hearing of and learning from the complexity of the question.

### ***Questioning local partners***

As noted earlier, the Committee began by responding to the expressed needs of local peace groups, but saw - especially at the Budapest evaluation in 1993 - that what is expressed is not necessarily what is wanted or perhaps is only a means to get what is wanted. In one conflict zone Committee members found that

*the main motivation of the people working for conflict resolution was a belief that this was likely to increase their chances of returning to their homes. [The outside facilitators] had to tell them repeatedly that their counterparts [from the ethnically antagonistic community] were not interested in this or talking about it. [The outside facilitators] decided they had to confront the issue and tell partners and network participants that if their only motivation for doing conflict resolution work was return, maybe they needed to review their commitment. Naming issues like this was both painful and important.*

In a discussion several years earlier on the role of outside facilitation, there had been a number of observations about the importance of listening, about the need for frankness but also about the problems of being frank. Sometimes, it was noted, it becomes possible to confront an issue not by focusing on the other person but by focusing on the work that needs doing. One Committee member referred to the outside facilitator's "Socratic function" - posing the questions that could lead to discovery.

### ***The place of healing***

The CCTS minutes contain many references to the grief and pain caused by conflict, and the need for healing after experiences of violence. Part of the discussion is on the forms of healing, as indicated above in the section on "Dealing with the Past". Peaceworkers often have to ask, commented one Committee member, "what stage were people at in the conflict and were they ready to undertake reconciliation work? Some kind of healing process might first have to take place". At the same time, healing could occur through practical work such as physical reconstruction, practical humanitarian work or programmes with children.

*It was difficult to envisage when one saw the pictures from [an atrocity] how the people could ever recover from what had happened. Yet there were people already doing things ...*

Indeed, peacework itself at some points can be seen as part of the process of healing. *No one would deny the need for dealing with people's trauma, but it was not enough simply to persuade people to be compliant and go back into the corrupt society.*

### ***Reconciliation***

In analysing the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia, some Committee members referred to the ethnic and other atrocities that took place there during the Second World War and Tito's burial of those conflicts under his slogan "brotherhood and unity". The lack of reconciliation at that time is now seen as one reason for war nearly half a century later.

However, the very word "reconciliation" in some conflict zones can trigger a hostile reaction. "Don't to talk me about reconciliation, not until ..." The Committee tends to treat reconciliation as a process with many ingredients. As a goal, however, it might be very remote. In one meeting the phrase "reconciliatory direction" was used.

The post-war goal is not immediately reconciliation. In many instances the most to hope for is non-lethal coexistence with respect for basic human rights. The issues of the past need dealing with at some stage, but in some situations, opined one member,

*sweeping things under the carpet can save the peace for now, and that will do for now.*

Another Committee member wondered at a different meeting if his own organisation was perpetuating a standstill in a particular conflict, by insisting that what was needed was not top-down decisive action by the prime minister but proper negotiations with civil society as part of the process.

Might the desirable be the enemy of the possible?

### ***Inclusive processes***

"Reconciliation" is an inclusive process, and "inclusiveness" is one of the values often associated with conflict transformation. Analysis should take account of different views of the conflict and look for an outcome that includes all sides. As a general orientation, Committee members might aspire to promote "inclusive" peace processes, they will probably "search for common ground" and encourage "mutual problem-solving". There will always be some limitations - such as excluding war criminals and torturers, or deciding that certain factions are beyond the pale - but in general there is a tendency to favour inclusiveness.

In practice, inclusiveness proves very demanding. There are times when trying to include an antagonist mainly serves to remind one of all the reasons that the antagonism exists. Rather than work with both populations in a conflict, sometimes Committee members have found themselves working in just one community. This might be in preparation for a more inclusive dialogue or it might be in the hope of such an outcome. Often, however, this is simply in recognition of the need for change within that community.

The Osijek peace group initiated a coalition to work on the question of return and invited

the participation of the Croatian Association of Displaced People, a nationalistic lobby group. This proved to be stretching inclusion too far, and the whole coalition was stymied until the Association were “disinvited”.

On the other hand, QPSW has sponsored a dialogue project among veterans of the wars in former-Yugoslavia that decided to exclude Kosovo Albanians from this process, restricting itself to the Slav veterans. The decision was based on what was judged to be practicable, although questions were raised when this was reported to the Committee. Later, the public version of the Berghof Institute's external evaluation<sup>4</sup> found that only one participant in the dialogue project questioned this exclusion. Unfortunately the report does not discuss the issue further or refer to it in recommendations.

### *Situational analysis*

Repeatedly in the newsround, the Committee member reporting has to emphasise the importance of a conflict analysis and strategic assessment. Some situations demand an urgent response, however not a “quick fix” but a response also informed by a long-term and medium-term perspective. Therefore Committee members try to look ahead but, on a number of occasions, they find themselves “chasing” events when a conflict escalates rapidly or takes an unforeseen turn. Within each situation, they have to identify the potential resources - meaning people - and also possible courses of action.

In the early days of CCCRTE, situational analysis depended more than anything on what was said by local peace groups in the situation. Training workshops might well entail offering tools for conflict analysis, etc, and “listening” included probing, questioning, drawing out different points of view within a group, as well as the facilitators offering their own observations. Later, however, various Committee members were more likely to become involved not as as the result of an invitation from an already existing peace group but via requests from other agencies or foreign fieldworkers wanting to promote a peace process. Also individual practitioners would find themselves offered work facilitating workshops of people brought together for dialogue, for problem-solving or as parts of a potential “peace constituency” in a situation.

In developing a programme, as organisational partners, as consultants or as external evaluators, Committee members find themselves engaged in projects that are multi-faceted (not just training, but looking at a range of support activities for a peace process). Further, they are usually seeking to construct a multi-level “peace constituency” (that is, even though they may have been initially contacted by grass-roots peace activists, the work has to reach beyond them, ultimately to include whatever type of group might be part of the peace constituency).

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4 Oliver Wils, *War, Veterans and Peacebuilding in Former-Yugoslavia: a pilot project of the Centre for Nonviolent Action (CNA)* (Berghof Occasional Paper Nr 24, February 2004), at [www.berghof-center.org/uploads/download/boc24e.pdf](http://www.berghof-center.org/uploads/download/boc24e.pdf)

The need for analysis is continuous, because good timing can be critical in these processes. There is a time for a dialogue, but dialogue can also be counter-productive. There is a time to “wage” nonviolent conflict *against* particular power-holders, as suggested in the seminar on “bringing campaigning power into conflict transformation”.

When is the apposite moment? Who do we want to draw in? Where do we want to reach?

At times, the Committee has had to recognise that local peace groups - “partners” of Committee members - might get stuck in their analysis. This can be one of the values of sympathetic outside engagement. Upon visiting Belgrade in autumn 1999, a Committee member reported that “unfortunately the opposition was too divided to offer much hope that [Milošević] would soon be removed”. However, as Milošević was toppled just a few months after these remarks, it is clear that the Committee's local partners were unduly pessimistic about that. Moreover, training to wage a nonviolent struggle played a significant part in Milošević's downfall. Nevertheless, as the day seminar on “campaigning power”<sup>5</sup> discussed, that nonviolent struggle did not then go on to achieve the desired fuller democratisation and deeper change in Serbian culture. If training in the techniques of nonviolent struggle was important, the values-based work more associated with Committee members is never beside the point.

Situational analysis implies seeing a situation in perspective, something often associated with experiences. Yet sometimes experience brings caution rather than wisdom. In some situations the conventional wisdom among experienced organisers is that “it's too soon” or “it's too risky” to embark on something - be it, a campaign or a peace-building initiative. This is a warning that Committee members have heard about the endeavours of some of their partners. Yet Committee members have found that those with less experience, with less caution, but with commitment and an infectious enthusiasm, can succeed in pulling off a project. Situational analysis has to be open to the idea of new energies can create new possibilities.

### *Macro-micro*

It is more or less an axiom that peacemaking at the macro-level - such as high-level peace negotiations to resolve conflict between communities - cannot succeed unless a popular base has been created for it, that is a constituency has been brought into existence that will support peace. The macro-level depends on the micro. But also the micro-level is vulnerable to developments outside their control - and especially at the macro-level - and needs to find means to influence what happens at the macro level.

The Committee's beginnings were working at the micro level, supporting local

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5 *CCTS Review 27* - <http://www.c-r.org/ccts/ccts27/index.htm>

peaceworkers to do what they could, what was in their power, while at the macro level the forces of hatred and war were still dominant in their society. Sometimes, a member commented, it felt as if conflict resolution training was preparing “to take an active part under circumstances which had not yet arisen”.

Another Committee member raised the issue of how

*such a selected set of small groups [as those travelling outside their country for a workshop] could ever form a critical mass so that they make a difference when back home.*

How can the micro-level come to affect the macro-level? Responding to the phenomenon of taking people - generally youth or women - from antagonistic communities to dialogue workshops in other countries, there has been some caution from Committee members.

*Bringing people together would not work if there was no larger political strategy for embedding such action in structures and procedures and larger societal events.*

Lederach might put it that such activities should be seen as contributing towards establishing “an infrastructure for peace-building”. Whether bringing people together is done through a workshop, a study trip or even a holiday programme, some follow-up is needed. At a minimum this will support those people who have been brought together on returning to their communities. In various situations, Committee members involved in facilitating inter-ethnic dialogue have asked others to follow up the contacts made, to “keep them warm” someone said. Ideally the process of bringing people together away from their homes will then lead to new links being made at other levels inside the situation - what in a workshop might be presented as an “exercise” in problem-solving could in practice lead to concrete proposals for multi-level action.

As already noted, Committee members have frequently faced frustration when governments or large institutions fail to take account of the efforts at the micro-level and ride roughshod over the wishes of those who do this work. Therefore the Committee also has set itself the task of educating policy makers, particularly those in Britain.

### ***Educating policy makers***

Representatives of relevant government departments have occasionally been guests at normal Committee meetings and also have attended various of the day events organised by the Committee.

Perhaps the most concerted effort at influencing policy makers occurred during the war in Kosovo, when the Committee commissioned the paper *Preparing for the After in Kosovo* and held a day seminar attended by many NGOs and some staff of the Department for International Development. This was later followed up by the Quaker UN Office in Geneva distributing the paper in UN circles and the German Institut für Friedensarbeit und Gewaltfreie Aktion translating it for circulation in Germany, including to ministry

contacts.

Of course, civil servants cannot be held responsible for their ministers. During NATO's campaign on Kosovo, Britain's Minister for International Development was a hawk, colluding with the NATO press office in pretending that there were serious democracy-building plans being laid for post-war Kosovo. As soon as the war ended, it was obvious there was no plan.

On another occasion, the Committee heard that a British Foreign Office researcher had presented a superb analysis. about conflicts involving Russia. However, the Committee member reporting this had to add with dismay, shortly afterwards, when Prime Minister Blair then met President Putin, such matters were not even on the agenda.

The conclusion is clear. Whatever understanding officials in government departments might have of certain conflicts, and however open to suggestion they are about suitable strategies to promote peace processes, something else is needed at the level of political will. The Committee is not a campaigning body, but organisations in the Committee and individuals attending the Committee have been active in campaigns against the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, and it is common that sentiments such as the following are expressed in Committee members:

*The government makes war and then expects people like us to go in and help pick up the pieces as part of the strategy. It was very difficult to hold on to hope and vision when one is surrounded by such dishonesty, hypocrisy and criminality. And for conflict transformation people to go in and mend the wounds implies some degree of complicity.*

One member of the Committee frequently alludes to the links and disparities between her professional life in conflict transformation and her personal involvement in the local Stop the War Campaign.

### ***Military intervention***

In the lifetime of the Committee, a number of issues have presented dilemmas and caused divisions among peacemakers. Above all the issue of humanitarian military intervention, currently often presented as the international "responsibility to protect". From the Committee's foundation, a number of members have engaged in public debate about these questions. Committee members might work to prevent the escalation of conflict into wholesale violence and to give an early warning of the imminence of armed conflict. They might deal with conflicts that seem frozen - in a stalemate, perhaps imposed from outside, or perhaps by restraints within the situation. Frequently they work in post-war situations, which can never be considered as "post-conflict" situations and where indeed the possibility of reconfiguration cannot be ruled out.

The fact or the prospects of international military intervention impinges on all this work.

Sometimes the organisations represented at the Committee enter a situation as part of the “internationalisation” of a conflict demanded by various local groups. Such “internationalisation” might be in the name of “prevention” but in some cases it is part of a graduated response, paving the way for military intervention. Sometimes they enter a situation post-war, dealing with all the issues exacerbated by war, and where an international military force is present “holding the ring”.

Debates arising from the issue of military intervention are touched on in most meetings of the Committee, and in 2006 were a central issue for an internal day workshop on “pacification versus peace-building” and later a day seminar “Is there a Role for the Military in Peacebuilding?” Nevertheless there have been few real debates in Committee meetings on the justifications for military intervention - more like occasional “skirmishes” between the pacifist and non-pacifist members of the Committee. Both points of view invoke realism - the realism that demands that pacifists accept that there are few nonviolent alternatives in life-threatening situations such as ethnic cleansing, and the realism that insists that military intervention at most freezes a situation and usually introduces new problems that need addressing.

Where there is consensus among the Committee seems to be:

- that there is always potential and a need for peace-building and conflict transformation work on the ground;
- that military intervention tends to be accompanied by the use of a terminology that is not just sloppy but misleading. “Post-conflict”, for instance, obscures the fact that the conflict persists after military intervention, while “international community” is used as a cloak for the interests claiming to speak on behalf of that “international community”.
- that it is necessary to scrutinise the claims to legitimacy not just of those of engaged in military action but also in other forms of intervention.<sup>6</sup>

Whatever dilemmas have been felt over the interventions in Bosnia, Kosovo and Darfur, there has been nothing but condemnation over the invasion of Iraq.

### ***Good practice***

The issue of the legitimacy of an intervenor can be related both to the agenda they're pursuing and also to the way they behave in a situation. The question of “what constitutes good practice?” has caused concern in the Committee from its inception, and there is much sound advice to practitioners in Diana Francis's book, *People, Peace and Power: Conflict Transformation in Action* (Pluto Press, 2002). As well as the issues of trainers conducting themselves according to certain standards, there are more complicated questions about side-effects that their presence might have in a situation. These include the dilemmas about self-reliance within a group - are people looking outside the situation

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<sup>6</sup> This point can be found in the writings of various members of Committee, past and present.

for what they should be seeking within it? is there a danger of undue dependence on the international (“external”) support? - and also the impact that the attention of internationals might have on relationships between local groups.

### *Cultural differences*

In reporting from different parts of the world, Committee members often find themselves explaining cultural differences, and also sometimes drawing attention to certain western cultural assumptions. “Universal truths” can actually be Western assumptions. Hence, for instance, Committee members have discussed ways in which other cultures recover from trauma, contrasting them with various Western models that insist on verbalising emotion.

The particular meaning attached to an action in a different cultural context has often been noted - from the importance of sharing a coffee in Bosnia to the tendencies of some cultures to prioritise social harmony over truth and therefore to tell you what they think you want to hear.

Cultural sensitivity is essential in conflict transformation work, but cultures are not fixed and beyond question. In all societies, at least some of the younger generation find reasons to challenge traditional cultures, and a number of patriarchal practices are particularly controversial. Moreover, cultures prove malleable, and therefore can be manipulated in order to foment war: nationalism thrives on the culture of feeling victimised as Committee members have commented at various times and from various situations. Furthermore, a population accustomed to war, corruption and antagonism is likely to have attitudes not necessarily inherent in their indigenous culture. Frequently facilitators of cross-cultural groups have to handle issues to do with the style of some workshop participants, sometimes connected to gender, sometimes to other factors.

### *Gender*

The gender aspects of conflict transformation work have, for the Committee, been unavoidable. Most members of the peace groups with which the Committee initially worked in former-Yugoslavia were, in the main, women. As noted, there were very few men who attended either the Budapest 1993 evaluation or the 1995 Schlaining meeting. It is clear that the experience of war is highly gendered, and gender also is an important factor shaping styles of peacework. The day seminar on gender was one of the most popular day events.

Committee members who sometimes work with women-only groups have occasionally speculated about how a particular workshop might have taken a different course if it had been mixed.

Women were for several years usually in the minority at Committee meetings (though the

balance is again shifting), and on various occasions Diana Francis has been the only woman present, and has sometimes been saddened to be the only one raising the gender dimension of a particular question.

### *Professionalism*

There are various ambivalences within the Committee around professionalism. On the one hand, Committee members seek to carry out work “professionally” - that is, according to certain standards and values. On the other hand, much peace activity is carried out voluntarily, including much of the maintenance of CCTS itself, and some of the qualities essential to peacebuilding work - civic courage, empathy, capacity to listen - you cannot buy.

Committee members have frequently expressed dismay at the mushrooming of “NGO culture”, referring to NGOs being set up rather in the spirit of small businesses, not to do what they think is needed in their own society but to tender for work that outside funders want to pay for. While lobby groups have campaigned for governments and inter-governmental bodies to recognise the potential role of “civil society”, in practice there is a tendency to reduce local NGOs to contractors or even instruments rather than recognising them as expressions of the aspiration for a better society. Another tendency has been for a small group of committed people to set up a small organisation. “Then they get funding and turned from being a movement into being a professional team and lose the volunteers”, or in some cases started arguing about who should get the money.

The Committee has also accumulated much experience of the ambivalent impact of large international NGOs entering a situation. One pattern is that such bodies often recruit from among the activists in local groups but then don't give them the same scope to use their talents.

The issues around this have been explored in day seminars, such as one in the peace-building series and another on the role of funders.

### *Personal integrity*

Every facilitator being paid to work on a foreign conflict is likely at some point to ask themselves about why they are here. These are issues that reflect on personal integrity. What am I doing working with the conflict of these people? What legitimacy or credibility do I have? For some Committee members, the work they do in their local communities is an essential reference point.

It can be easy to disparage those who spend their time working on other people's conflicts, but in the case of the Committee this work is grounded in a sense of human solidarity and as an extension of the active citizenship that sees Committee members trying to change the

policies of the British government and institutions.

### ***Don't glorify civil society***

The Committee is grounded in supporting the involvement of civil society in peace processes. "Civil society refers to the totality of voluntary civic and social organisations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society as opposed to the force-backed structures of a state" (Wikipedia): it does not necessarily refer to values that might be considered "civil". While a healthy civil society is something to be encouraged, Committee members sometimes remind each other that in a number of situations elements of civil society have stoked the fires of hatred.

## **7. Instead of a conclusion**

In a period of rapid expansion in the field of conflict transformation, and also of rapid learning from those practitioners engaged with international social conflict, the Committee has been at the forefront and it continues to yield further insights.

Informing us of the death of Adam Curle in September 2006, one of the Committee members referred to him as "a founder" of the CCTS. Another pointed out that Adam was "*the* instigator", and it can be seen partly as a tribute to Adam - a pioneer of peace education - that throughout its evolution, the Committee has been a place of cooperative endeavour, of honest reflection, of willingness to confess doubts, to experiment and to take some risks.

**Howard Clark, October 2006**

## **Appendix I**

### **Topics for days workshops/seminar - 1995-2006**

Oct 2006: Seminar on  
Is there a Role for the Military in Peacebuilding?

Jan 2006: Seminar on  
Pacification or Peacebuilding? Defence, Foreign Policy and Conflict Transformation

April 2005: Seminar on  
Campaigning Power and Civil Courage: Bringing 'People Power' back into Conflict Transformation

Oct 2004: Seminar on  
Funding Conflict Transformation: Money, Power and Accountability

Feb 2004: Seminar on  
Gender and Conflict Transformation

Oct 2003: Seminar on  
The Ethics of Post War Intervention

Jan 2003: Seminar on  
Economy, Conflict and the Private Sector'

Oct 2002: Seminar on  
Dealing with the Past

Nov 2001: fourth and final seminar on post-conflict peacebuilding:  
The Role of NGOs

May 2001: third seminar on post-war peacebuilding  
The interplay of domestic, regional and international forces

Dec 2001: second seminar on post-war peacebuilding  
Demilitarising Minds and Societies

June 2000: opening seminar on post-war peacebuilding  
Conflict Transformation - from Violence To Politics. First seminar in a series about post-war peacebuilding.

April 1999: Day event:  
Preparing for after the war

November 1998: day workshop  
Conflict Resolution Training: Purpose and Content

January 1998: Day workshop:  
The problems of return

July 1997: Day workshop:  
Advocacy and conflict resolution - a time to take sides?

May 1996: Day Workshop:  
Conflict resolution training - Dilemmas of evaluation

## **Appendix II**

### **Topics still under consideration**

Inclusiveness in resolving conflicts

Education and Peace

The 'facilitators dilemma' – preconceptions of outcome, and the steer towards producing an outcome; the effect of these on open process.

Media, Conflict and Peace Processes

Role of Russia's near-abroad

Limitations of dialogue and the need for Movement Building

September 11 and its aftermath

Our own perspective and philosophy in relation to the conflict transformation process

Development and conflict

Methods of assessment – including the notion of impact indicators

Faith communities and conflict transformation.

Power, Justice and War: Addressing the Causes of Terror

Transcending State Nationalism: Finding New Models of Collective Identity