

Dear Readers,

This, as you see, is Newsletter number 10, though the first batch of our last issue was mistakenly labelled as number 8, for which we apologise. That last issue was devoted to our seminar on 'Conflict Transformation – from Violence to Politics', which was the first in a series of four. The second, entitled 'Demilitarising Minds and Societies', which will be introduced by a paper from Howard Clark, takes place on December 7th. (Please see separate sheet.)

At our last committee meeting, it was agreed that our newsletters devoted to seminar papers and reports should alternate with issues focussed on practice in conflict transformation support. This Newsletter, therefore, contains two workshop reports, the first on Conflict Transformation Training in Sudan, the second on Democracy and Peacebuilding in the Balkans. We are able to produce it with the generous editorial help of Anne Rogers, who also prepared the last Newsletter for print (and was not responsible for the error in numbering!).

Conflict Transformation Training in Sudan

by Paul Clifford

Introduction

In July last year I was invited to run a Training Workshop on behalf of Responding To Conflict (RTC) in Conflict Management in El Obeid, Sudan. The invitation came from SOS Sahel UK, a British NGO, which has a Natural Forest Management Project (NFMP) at El Ain, near El Obeid.

The project area is important for mobile and sedentary pastoral groups and settled farming communities and conflict over land access is common. As more farmers settle in the area the land available for grazing is shrinking. Another factor is that the Civil War to the South means that access to pastures in that area is affected, resulting in some Nomads spending longer in the El Obeid area (putting more strain on limited natural resources such as water).

The training workshop brought together Traditional Leaders, Local Government representatives, representatives of various line ministries, NFMP staff and OXFAM staff for six days to explore the nature of conflict, analyse its causes, explore different interventions and practise skills. One of the main objectives was that some of these participants might go on to intervene in local conflict situations.

The Training Workshop

Some 30 people attended the workshop. Most had an understanding of English, ranging from fluent to basic, but some did not. It was thus decided to run the workshop in Arabic, using an interpreter. My co-trainer was Sudanese, whose first language is Arabic and so between the three of us we facilitated and translated.

It was clear from the round of Introductions that most of the key figures who could be influential in resolving these disputes were present at the workshop. We agreed a programme for the workshop with the participants, which would include looking at traditional Sudanese conflict resolution methods plus other approaches from around the world.

These traditional conflict resolution methods are based on the teachings of the Koran and, especially, the principle of forgiveness. People in conflict are exhorted to forgive each other and reconcile their differences. A wonderful demonstration of traditional conflict resolution methods was presented to the workshop in the form of a role play by the Traditional Leaders.

In time honoured fashion, each side blamed the other for causing the conflicts. When we repeated the role play and encouraged the participants to analyse the conflicts between Farmers and Nomads using conflict analysis tools, it became clear that the causes of the conflict were much deeper. The participants used some simple conflict analysis tools to gather information about the conflict and their different perceptions before the different parties were brought together for mediation.

Comparing the two cases, the participants decided that the traditional approach did not address the underlying causes of the conflict and so, after a while the conflict would re-surface and have to be resolved all over again. It was fascinating to observe the fusion of the traditional conflict resolution methods with the conflict analysis tools created by the participants in the second role play.

By the end of the workshop the different participants were already talking with each other about the possibility of working together for the first time. The chance to experiment with the tools during the workshop and to see how a new approach could work together with their own traditional systems gave the participants the confidence to try and intervene in one of the local conflicts between Farmers and Nomads.

The Conflict Intervention

The initiative was taken by the NFMP project staff, who approached four of the Traditional Leaders, from the July workshop, to work with them to try and resolve an ongoing conflict between a local village (Gagrur) and a group of Nomads (Baggara).

The Project staff and Traditional Leaders contacted the villagers from Gagrur, whom they knew through their work, to see if they would be amenable to a meeting to talk about land management issues. At this meeting, the villagers identified a conflict with a different group of semi-Nomadic Pastoralists (the Shenabla) as being a more important conflict.

The Project staff and Traditional Leaders thus decided to approach the Shenabla to seek out their views and see if they would be willing to try and resolve the conflict with the villagers. They were amenable and so separate further meetings were set up, at which the disputants were encouraged to use some of the conflict analysis tools to analyse the conflict.

One tool they used which was popular with all the participants is called the 'Conflict Tree'. This was developed out of work done in Wajir in North East Kenya by local people there in trying to resolve their conflicts. Each side in a dispute draws a tree in which the trunk of the tree represents the 'core problem', the branches are the symptoms or consequences of the conflict and the roots are the root causes of the conflict. With the consent of each side, the Trees can then be swapped with the other side so that each can understand how they both perceive the conflict. This can often lead to dialogue.

After discussing the situation separately with the Shenabla and the villagers, both sides agreed to a face-to-face meeting, which took place over two days and resulted in a written agreement (not an aspect covered in the workshop!) between the two sides.

The Follow Up

The above took place in August. In September, I had the opportunity to go back to Sudan, to meet with the NFMP Project staff and Traditional Leaders, who had undertaken the mediation as well as others who had attended the first workshop. I also had the opportunity to meet with the disputants in the conflict to get their views on how the whole process worked and was also able to watch a video of the process (taken with the disputants' consent!).

It was fascinating to see once again how the mediators had combined their traditional methods with the conflict analysis tools to great effect and also to hear from the disputants how much they valued the approach.

The Learning

It is imperative that training undertaken in different cultural settings takes account of traditional methods. It is also clear that the traditional methods attempt to resolve the symptoms of conflicts, but do not tackle underlying causes. We can all learn from different approaches to conflict, taken by different peoples and, for me, it re-affirms peoples' creativity in coming up with new and effective approaches when they are presented with the space and opportunity to do so.

It was also interesting to note that, although, ostensibly the conflict was a local one, the disputants were also seeing it in the context of the overall conflict in Sudan. Putting local conflicts in the broader context is thus a crucial element in trying to develop sustainable solutions to conflicts.

Paul Clifford

Democracy dialogue in the Balkans: a continuation of the work begun by the Richardson Institute

by Diana Francis and Tom Davies

This is the report of the second in a series of regional workshops, successors to the bilateral Serbia – Kosovo/a dialogue workshops, arranged by the Richardson Institute, before the NATO bombing and all that followed (see Newsletter number 8). The new political realities made bilateral dialogue unacceptable from a Kosovar point of view. Giving the workshop a new, regional frame opened up different possibilities and at the same time enabled the old dialogue to continue in new circumstances.

The purpose of these regional workshops, held at the American University in Blagoevgrad, Bulgaria, was to explore the concepts and possibilities of regional co-operation and democracy in the multi-ethnic societies of Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo/a and Albania.

This second workshop aimed to build on the energy generated by the first, held at the same venue in December last year, and to deepen participants' commitment to forming a regional network for action for interethnic understanding and democracy. The proposed content of the workshop was a further exploration of the nature, processes, policies and structures for securing and developing interethnic democracy and co-operation, in ways that would at the same time facilitate a deepening of the trust, understanding and democratic co-operation within the participant group. Integral to this was a determination to grapple with the difficulties and possibilities for participants of pursuing goals of democracy and tolerance in their own different and difficult circumstances.

After the positive start made in the first regional workshop, the aim of the second was to deepen and

extend understanding of the nature, processes, policies and structures for securing and developing interethnic democracy and co-operation; also to deepen the trust, understanding and democratic co-operation within the participant group.

Participation

Although four participants had been prevented at the last minute from coming, fourteen participants were gathered on time for the opening session on the first evening. There were six men and eight women: three Serbs from Serbia, one Roma from Serbia, two Montenegrins, three Albanians from Kosovo/a, two Albanians from Albania and three Macedonians (one Albanian and two Slav). This success in bringing together such a diverse group was achieved by persistence and hard work on the part of the organiser in the face of difficulties of communication with those not on email (especially in Albania). The last minute cancellations reflected economic pressures (the need to earn and not annoy employers) and the workload of those working within NGOs.

There were more new participants than envisaged and fewer from the previous workshop. Two former participants had been forbidden by their employer to participate again, one had married and gone to live in Germany, another had been unable to free herself from work and yet another had been obliged to cancel at the last minute because of unforeseen family demands. It is foreseen that all these former participants will remain part of the network which is developing and in the project work which seems to

be emerging. In the meantime it was good to include new people, though the mix of old and new participants affected the 'gelling' of the group and meant it took time.

Workshop content

Monday evening

After the usual words of welcome, and acknowledgements of the support of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, which had made the workshop possible, the workshop began with introductions (first in pairs, then in plenary) and a time in which those participants who had been in the first regional workshop told the new participants about that experience and its importance for them. They spoke of our exploration of identity which had a great impact on their thinking, and of the role-plays which had illuminated issues of power and leadership; but most of all they spoke of learning to listen, dismantling prejudice and overcoming scepticism, learning to understand each other – what was different and what was common – and the friendship which had grown between them. They also talked about the new energy with which they went home, which had led to new action (including a new schools programme and a visit of Palestinians and Israelis which had been arranged) and to a great desire to share what they had learnt with friends, family and colleagues.

Then we turned to the purposes of this second workshop, with a reminder of the purposes given in the invitation and a question to participants about their own hopes. These were that we should have more simulations on 'concrete' problems in imaginary scenarios and a strong focus at the end of the workshop on real projects for the future, so that NGOs in different countries could work together between workshops and assess progress and improving their project design when they next met. They were eager to find ways of spreading good ideas and good practice. There was also an interest in examining the issues of integration and separation and exploring new models of democracy. Meeting 'the other' remained a strong theme and the freedom of the media and in particular the interactive use of radio between young people in different countries was mentioned.

As it happened, the wishes of participants coincided closely with the provisional workshop design which the facilitators (Tom Davies and Diana Francis) had presented.

Tuesday

The first session began with a short presentation on democracy – a definition of it and list of key aspects of it (including structures, processes, rights and the notion of civil society). The notion was then raised of the 'competing goods' which have to be balanced within any democracy (liberty and security, financial freedom and social provision etc.).

A 'continuum line' exercise was used to explore some of these, participants taking up a position in relation to the two poles and having the opportunity to explain their reasons. One 'values pair' explored in this way was co-operation and emphasis on consensus versus opposition and emphasis on difference. Consensual politics were valued for their constructive and peacemaking qualities, oppositional politics for their definition and clarity – and because some things need to be opposed. In the second pairing, generous social provision versus financial freedom and low taxation, those who gave priority to the latter did so because of their experience of paying high taxes and seeing no good results. A small majority still positioned themselves on the side of social provision. The third pairing, an emphasis on the personalities of leaders versus one on policy, led to an animated discussion in which the importance of policies was recognised but the need to have trustworthy people to deliver on

them was also acknowledged. The area of disagreement was the importance of charisma and 'toughness'. In the line-up on the rights of majorities versus those of minorities, it became clear that although all supported the notion of minority rights, some took a position which reflected their reaction to experience of domination by minorities. The last pairing explored in this way was freedom of speech versus silencing unwanted voices. Considerable weighting went to the 'some voices should be silenced' end, fascism being cited as an example. The idea of 'awkward voices' returned several times during the week.

After the break the participants divided into three groups and each chose a different additional pairings to discuss. Towards the end of the session they presented their findings in plenary.

The first group took the opposition between a strong centre and strong devolution. They found little to be said for a strong centre, though they noted that a common standard and recognition of education was desirable, though with local linguistic freedom and room for difference within the curriculum (especially in relation to history). On the whole they favoured regional autonomy and had discussed a bi-cameral parliamentary structure. The second group had discussed the relationship between a strong sense of history and concentration on the present and future. This group found nothing to be said on the side of history, which was seen as a story of corruption, totalitarianism, poverty and isolation. They wanted a break with history and a move in the direction of honest work, a system open to foreign investment, a rising standard of living, strong civil society and well-developed relationships with other countries. The third group had discussed the relationship between a strong state and strong civil society. They said they wanted both sectors to be strong, the state providing the framework and context to make a healthy civil society possible. Civil society on the other hand had the job of correcting and 'controlling' the state when necessary.

The afternoon began with a brief summary of the morning's work, and the conclusion that democracy was an aspiration rather than something ever fully and finally achieved, a process characterised by accountability, transparency, inclusiveness and participation. We then moved on to the preparation of

an extended simulation exercise, based on the idea of an 'Assembly of the Regions' in the Balkans. Each participant was given the task of outlining her/ his representational profile: the geographical region represented (a group of local authorities smaller than a state), with its diversity of population, urban or rural character, economy etc. They were to make clear how they had been elected, who voted for them and who did not; what was their majority and whom they felt they were representing now. These things were written on large sheets of paper and each participant presented her/ his 'profile' to the rest.

Most participants chose real regions to represent, from their own regions of origin. One chose a powerful Western region and three chose imaginary ones, one of which included a weak majority and powerful minority, keeping otherwise suppressed issues of power and ethnic identity present within the ensuing process. The regions described ranged from capital cities to rural and coastal areas with widely varying populations, most with identified ethnically different groupings. Most representatives stated that they had been voted for by a cross section of different ethnic groups, and claimed 100% support! Some identified with particular sections of society, including in one case 'the workers'. A significant number said they would represent the whole population, regardless of who voted for them.

After the break, the representatives chose topics to work on, from a long list of possibilities. Committees were then set up for

the four topics: Education and Training, Crime and Corruption, the Economic Crisis and Environment and Ecology.

The evaluation at the end of this first full day was positive, the only suggestion being that we should talk more about what was actually going on in the region and draw in those who were less active or vocal. Since the plan for the next day was to involve everyone in role-plays which would be used to explore regional issues, this was good confirmation that we were on the right track.

Wednesday

The plan was to use each of the four sessions for one role-play of a committee operating within the simulated Council of the Balkans Regions. The task for each committee was to set its agenda for the coming months, identifying priorities and goals. Each had an appointed chair to facilitate the process, ensuring that minority/majority issues did not get overlooked and ensuring that the meeting ended on time. Much of the focus of the feedback and discussion following each role-play centred on the question of leadership.

In the first role-play, in which the topic was education and training, the chair was, fortuitously, the representative of a rich Western region and this doubly powerful role became the object of much discussion and learning. It was felt that the meeting had been somewhat fragmented and unsystematic and that the power of money had dominated it. Nonetheless, the other committee members and observers agreed that the atmosphere of co-operation and the chair's friendliness and openness to the suggestions of others had been very positive. One participant said that it was important to be recognised as having something to give as well as to get.

In the second role-play, involving the committee on Crime and Corruption, the chair, having learned from the feedback after the first role-play, began by inviting all committee members to outline the situation in their own regions. She was afterwards criticised for the fact that all of them addressed their remarks to her and only later directly to each other, but as this pattern continued throughout all the role-plays it became clear that this is a characteristic pattern within groups and that the facilitator has a midwife role in bringing full participation into being.

The catalogue of crimes which were taking place in different parts of the region was horrifying and included drugs, car theft, murders for body organs, kidnapping, weapons trading and smuggling, the 'black' market and tax avoidance, street gangs and killings and corruption within all public domains, including the police. Proposals for regional action centred on the development of police co-operation across borders, the establishment of honest, 'tough' commissions to investigate and sack corrupt officials, a secret service (a proposal later questioned and seen as potentially adding to the problem), gun control, involving the civilian population in addressing crime and corruption and educating the young. It was noted during the feedback that what had been learned from the first role-play about group process had helped this second committee to be effective in generating constructive ideas.

The third committee and its chair, meeting during the first afternoon session, discussed the Economic Crisis. Two of its members chose to play their roles in a somewhat less co-operative manner and it was interesting to see the stimulus provided by their behaviour. One of them was insistent that the situation in her region was much worse than anywhere else and suggested that the regions really had nothing in common. The other (the Western representative) was patronising and distanced herself from the problems of the others and any responsibility. There was some debate afterwards about the way the chair had responded, trying to keep the meeting on track and find a way forward. It was felt

that having to deal with provocative and negative members had in fact lent energy to the process. The themes of independence, interdependence, help and interference, which had surfaced in the first role-play, were further discussed.

The fourth and last role-play, involving the committee on Environment and Ecology, featured no awkward members and concentrated very much on the substantive issues of waste management, regional institutions and standards, education, and measures to control pollution. The link between poverty and pollution was noted, for instance in relation to the pollution caused by old cars and the cost of converting them. Fines and taxes could, it was thought, be useful in relation to bigger businesses. It was noted by all that this was again a very co-operative discussion. It was also noted that the pollution caused by the recent bombing had not been mentioned.

This role-play and subsequent feedback brought us to the end of the day. The evaluation was again very positive, both in relation to the issues discussed and the learning about responsibility, leadership and facilitation. It was suggested that it would be important, if possible, for more participants to have the chance to try their hands at facilitation. Although the co-operative energy of the day was mentioned as positive and it was said that the discussions had been characterised by freedom, honesty and the involvement of everyone, with no negative feelings about ethnicity, one person felt that some participants were still holding something back. This prompted another to say that the workshop facilitators were not fully present in the group and should tell the participants more about their own vision. One participant said that there had been a lot of good ideas but that they had no power to make them happen. It was therefore suggested that we should take time to look at how to build power.

Thursday

In the previous day's evaluation it had been suggested that there should be more opportunities for facilitation. The facilitators therefore asked for each group process for the rest of the workshop to be facilitated by a different person, who would receive feedback from the group as to how he/ she had fulfilled the task. The first group was set the task of reviewing the learnings of the previous day in terms

of leadership, democracy and representation; also to think whether any issues or areas of learning had been overlooked, in particular any interethnic dimensions of the topics addressed, or any other identity related issues. This would give participants the opportunity to raise any issues which they had not so far managed to voice. Each group was asked to appoint a reporter.

It was clear again from the reports that the learning from the role-plays around the question of leadership had been important. The idea of facilitation had been new to some. There had been learning about the use of power. It was felt that the question of influence should be distinguished from that of co-ordination and giving energy and vision. It was noted that in all the groups the first interactions had taken place through the facilitator and that this was probably a reflection of regular patterns in group dynamics and the facilitator's 'midwife' role. The degree of co-operation in the role-plays was seen as positive and it was noted that all the committee work had been managed without voting. There was some discussion of the relative merits of consensus and voting, and the value of opposition. The importance of compromise was stressed by one group, who saw that co-operative problem-solving had been done in spite of different starting points; but in subsequent discussion this was questioned and a distinction was made between giving way on non-essentials and giving up on essential human needs. The only missing topic that they had noted was the problem of uranium in the discussions of the environmental

group. Questions remained around the question of representation of all constituents and whether possible ethnic dimensions of the issues were still being hidden.

The second session, in response to the request and concerns voiced at the end of the previous day, began with a presentation by the two facilitators on their own personal values and motivations, under the heading of 'Bridging the gap between our reality and other realities, the ideal and the real, powerlessness and power'. Diana spoke of reality as a process and each person's ability and responsibility to contribute to the process of making it. She argued that our interdependence indicates the need for us to exercise our power with, not over, each other. Affirming her belief in the fundamental equality of all human beings, she said she rejected the notion that violence and hurting could achieve positive ends and believed that the only constructive power lay in respect, love, wisdom and co-operation. Giving examples of those who had had the grace to make beautiful things grow out of ashes, she insisted that the realities that are made on the ground are no less real than the realities of politicians, and that one can affect the other. She ended with a quotation from Adrienne Rich:

*'My heart is moved by all I cannot save,
So much has been destroyed.
I have to cast my lot with those who perversely, with
no extraordinary power,
Reconstitute the world.'*

Tom spoke of his belief in progress, despite the bad things that had happened in the world in the last century, and of the paradox of this. He said he believed in the reality of the spiritual as well as the human world. He saw conflict as important and potentially creative in the work for change. He spoke of the paradoxical relationship between wanting to be a leader and wanting to be a facilitator and of his dislike of the concept of the nation state and his recognition of the need for identity and a sense of country. He said he was in favour of the UN, of regions, of movements that subvert the state. He thought that emotions were important, but that war was a very emotional activity. He too ended with a quotation (from June Jordan):

'My heart is not peripheral to me.'

These personal statements led into a time for each participant to speak of her/ his own feelings, beliefs and concerns. An apple was placed in the middle of the floor and any person wishing to speak picked it up and held it, replacing it when he/she had finished.

It seems strange not to give names here to the contributors, but since we had an agreement that individual contributions would not be personally attributed they will not be given. The first speaker, from Macedonia, referred to the power of economic institutions, the need to rediscover ways of living together and his determination to develop his work with young people and their parents. He said that what he needed was a continuity of financial support for his work. The next speaker, from Pristina, emphasised that we can all do something and that we should not underestimate the importance of small things. He noted that he acted with a degree of personal risk from his own government and had to take this into account. Pointing to the importance of making peace and openness a reality within our own organisations and among friends, he said that the future would not be built without us; we had to do it ourselves.

The third speaker referred to Thoreau's idea that moral minorities can act to change majorities for the better. Many of his friends had been killed in the recent war. He wanted to stay in his home city of Belgrade and help to develop a group of young people who could do something for the future and to work with Civic Initiatives to support local groups in other areas. He would

like to work in solidarity with other workshop participants from different places.

The next speaker drew attention to the voices of Albanians from Pristina who had suffered and lost a great deal and were not being heard. Many could not trust Serbian people. She herself could trust some, but she could not listen to Serbian music any more. You couldn't run before you could walk. Trust had to be re-established through action. There were many Kosovar Albanians still in prison. They must be released.

Another Pristina participant added that it was necessary to hear Serbian people say that what was done was not done in their name. Serbs in Kosovo/a now looked to the Serb army to save them, rather than finding their own way of co-existing with their neighbours. They were influenced by Serb propaganda and needed to recognise the changed reality and find a place in a new society. An Albanian Kosovar who had recently moved to Pristina from Belgrade said that her reality was different: that through the multi-ethnic radio station she worked on they were including all ethnic groups as equals; but that outside in the streets they dared not speak their own languages; you had to speak Albanian if you wanted to survive. She was trying to live by the motto, 'Co-operation is better than conflict'.

A Serb participant from Pancevo said that many of her friends found it hard to believe that she had been able to talk (in the first workshop) with Albanians. The sad events of recent years had clouded perceptions. The problems we had been discussing were not ethnically divided. She had long been depressed but her work with children had given her new hope for the future of a Balkans community. We had not talked in this workshop about the painful experiences of war and division because some of us had been in the previous workshop where these questions had been opened. She would not like to go through that pain again. She was delighted to have spent time with a new participant from Albanian. They had spoken together as if in one language because they shared the same thoughts.

One of the participants from Montenegro spoke of her own pain. The people of the Balkans were impulsive, she said. She had suffered in the war and also felt she might not know the real meaning of suffering. People

ran then and now did not know how to walk. We needed to learn to walk together.

A participant from Albania expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to talk in a human, friendly way with a wide variety of deeply concerned young people. She would spread the message of co-operation in Albania. She saw the problems of the region as coming not from ordinary people but from above. In the north of Albania, where blood feuds were a major problem, the lesson of co-existence needed to be learned. The other Albanian participant said how much he had learned from all that had been shared within the workshop so far.

Then a participant from Belgrade, trained as an economist, described how he had chosen to stay in Belgrade and work for Civic Initiatives and the Democracy School, rather than working for a bank or going abroad. He had been inspired by a book about democracy which had made him realise that it concerned us all. He liked Diana's idea that you could work for a long time without seeing results but that one day things would come together. Sometimes he was sceptical but in a deep place he believed that change would come. At Civic Initiatives he found the energy to act for change.

The next speaker was the workshop's one Roma participant. She said she wanted to talk about her own people whose problems were always marginalised. They were seen as only good for concentration camps and shooting. She wanted to say, 'We exist, pay attention to us'. They needed to

learn to speak for themselves and to be visible. One day she wanted the issues of the Roma as the main theme for a workshop.

Another speaker from Montenegro stated that the Serb-Albanian conflict had not made everyone dirty. Not everyone had taken part. Loss was not about who was guilty. The problem was how to live with the killers. When you had lost everyone it was not possible to carry on as if nothing had happened.

A Macedonian participant said that the loss of life created big problems but that they were impossible to solve because different groups had been responsible for killings at different points in history. Somehow people had to find ways to live together nonetheless. Another Macedonian participant spoke of the power of ignorance and fear and the difficulty that came from not knowing all that had happened.

This sharing was important in deepening the understanding between different individuals and ethnicities within the workshop and laid the ground for an extremely productive final day. On the Thursday afternoon, however, we all went on an outing to the Rila Monastery, and hour's drive up into the mountains. This was a time of sunshine, singing and relaxation, well-earned after the intensity of the morning's work.

Friday

The last day, as requested and planned from the beginning of the workshop, was focussed on the development of joint projects. However, it was felt to be important to hear more first about existing work being done by participants, in particular our Roma participant, who spoke about her work with the Roma Information Center, focussed on children and women. In discussion after her presentation it became clear that Roma constituted a minority in all the territories represented and a majority nowhere, and that their case was in urgent need of greater attention and representation. Her presence in our group was therefore of great importance.

Participants were then asked to look at a list of all the issues that had been discussed during the workshop thus far and to write on a piece of paper the issue they would most like to work on. They then looked for others with a similar interest and formed two groups. The groups had the task of appointing a facilitator and

reporter and then clarifying what it was they wanted to work on, with whom, developing a time-line for the project and deciding what resources, human, material and financial, would be needed; and of those resources what was already available and what would have to be found. They were also to allocate responsibilities for carrying the project forward and to think about the possible obstacles they would face and how they might cope with or overcome them. Lastly, they were asked to decide what immediate actions would need to be taken by whom.

The reports which were made towards the end of the first afternoon session were exciting. The first group (which comprised those with a particular interest in working with children and young people) had designed a project entitled 'Balkans Centre for Peace and Co-operation'. It was to be forwarded by the multi-ethnic centre in Tetovo, Macedonia, called 'Babylon'. The board would be made up, in the first instance, of the participants themselves, but would be open to all who wished to co-operate. The resources they already had were offices, computers, ideas and educated people. What they would need were money and support 'from some governments'. The different members of the group would each take responsibility for some aspect of the work: action to do with ecology, work to connect children from different regions, work with students and education, work with women (focussing on domestic violence and the need for greater participation by women in organisations), co-operation between agricultural institutions and farmers and the whole field of

culture. There would be plenty of obstacles, political and financial. They would appeal to foreign organisations for support and try to get the media on their side. The group was really serious about this project and planned to meet again in Skopje to develop its plans and draw up a budget, with Babylon as the convenor of that meeting.

The second group had worked on how to bring back trust (between Albanians and Serbs in Kosova/a and Serbia). They had planned a joint campaign to 'Release the Prisoners, Stop the Killing'. They planned to involve different kinds of NGOs, a forum or writers, media, lawyers. They wanted to extend their campaign through all the regions through concerts, politics, the media, the arts and by the use of stickers and posters. They hoped to make a start in June, working with a variety of NGOs, and would need financial and media support. There would need to be meetings of all who were going to be involved. Possible obstacles to this project might be the respective governments and extremists. They would need to work on convincing their own populations and involve famous people: politicians, singers, lawyers. They were the ones who would have to take the first actions and they would need to meet to develop their plans. One of the Pristina participants undertook to draft a project proposal and circulate it for feedback. He would also include in his mailing participants from earlier RI workshops.

The design of this project was in itself something of a triumph for those involved, representing a really courageous engagement with issues which had generated considerable heat and winning through to a joint approach. The participants were rightly pleased with what they had achieved and hoped that they would be able to bring it to fruition at some level. It is an ambitious project which, if it can be realised, could have considerable impact.

For the final evaluation, participants were divided into three groups, with the 'old lags' in one group and the new participants divided between the other two. The first of the latter reported that for two of them this had been their first experience of a workshop or seminar and that they had had no idea of 'the importance of the relationship between themselves and the facilitators/ organisers'.

The two with previous workshop experience had realised that communication of this kind was very important, but thought that this workshop had been different and more important than the others. Their own experiences and views as participants had been made central and the facilitators had not imposed their own ideas on the group. They were very satisfied. The project proposals developed that day were practical and important and grew out of dynamic and productive discussions. They had learnt a great deal about leadership, facilitation and reporting and felt this would make them more effective in their NGO work. They really hoped they would implement the projects they had planned.

The other 'new' group reported that they had found the workshop educational and useful. They had improved their language skills and worked together co-operatively, as teams. They had 'raised their possibilities' and increased their belief in themselves. They had also developed wonderful friendship, regardless of ethnic background. Through their work together they had come to realise that there was plenty of room for action to address concrete problems and had at the same time attained a 'higher level of democracy'. They also felt the experience would help them organise seminars themselves. Overall they had developed the feeling that they had the power to contribute to changing things and that all nations were equal.

The 'old lags' were glad that they had covered different topics in this second workshop. This time the focus had been more practical or

concrete. The mix of new participants with old ones had changed the atmosphere of the group. The role-plays had been 'fantastic'. They had come up with practical solutions to the problems under discussion and some of their thinking had been converted into concrete projects. By the end of the workshop they felt they had come close to the rest of the group.

On the basis of this evaluation, ideas for future seminars were discussed. It was suggested that in the future Roma participants from other parts of the region should be invited, along with representatives of other smaller ethnic minorities, such as Gorani from Kosovo/a and Albanians or Turkish people from Montenegro, Hungarians, Moslems and Jews from Serbia. The question was also raised of whether we should extend the geographical representation to include participants from Bosnia and Croatia. It became clear that all these suggestions made numbers a problem and on balance the feeling was that we should keep to our current geographical boundaries but try to represent some more of the ethnic complexities within them while not losing the major group components. A tall order! The importance was also stressed of trying to include refugees from different parts of the region and others directly affected by the war. Once again the idea was raised of holding the next seminar within a Western multi-ethnic democracy. The matters of cost and visas were mentioned, but a promise made to bear this suggestion in mind.

The workshop closed with thanks and congratulations all round, three cheers for our organiser, Gema Gonzalez, and three for us all and our continuing work.

Conclusions and thoughts about the future

The workshop seems to have met its goals in terms of what was learned and appreciated by participants. The learning about leadership seemed particularly important, along with questions of power, responsibility and representation – all key issues for democracy. These things were addressed both at the intellectual and the experiential level. At the same time the important substantive issues of educational needs and the problems of criminality and corruption,

ecological destruction and collapsed economies, were addressed.

In addition, two projects of quite different character had been planned, albeit in a rudimentary way. Both of these projects seem potentially important, the one in terms of cross-cultural co-operation in education for tolerance and democracy; the other in terms of re-establishing trust between divided groups in the region and an assertion of democratic fundamentals. The friendships which were made across all the ethnic and political and other divisions represented in the group were a powerful symbol of what is possible and it is clear that participants are eager to talk about this experience with others quite widely at home. They were clear that the work of prejudice reduction was important to them.

It seems important to further extend this loose community or network of young people and to strengthen the capacities within it and its potential for generating and furthering practical projects which are based on existing NGO capacity but have the added dimension which regional co-operation can bring. Civic Initiatives is willing to be a partner in this and has contacts throughout the region in question, with the exception of Kosovo/a and Albania, in addition to the direct organisational links which are being built. In Kosovo/a existing contacts with the Forum, Post Pessimists, Radio Contact and others are good, as well as with the Balkans Peace Team members, past and present. In Albania additional contacts would be helpful.

In future workshops we plan to develop the themes of democracy which have already been established and continue the discussion on substantive issues which are the concern of citizens and should be the concern of governments in the region. We shall also offer support and opportunities for co-operation in local-regional project development. The website which has been set up will make regular contact and discussion easier and more lively for those participants, past and present, who have access to e-mail. We must find ways of ensuring that no one is left out. Funding permitting, at least two more workshops will be held this year, the first to draw in more new participants and monitor the progress of the projects; the second to consolidate the community of older and newer participants and integrate newer members into further project development.

*Diana Francis
Tom Davies*

CCTS

Participating organisations

International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Alkmaar

War Resisters International, London

Richardson Institute for Peace Research, Lancaster

Quaker Peace and Service, London

Responding to Conflict, Birmingham

International Alert, London

Conflict Analysis and Development Unit, London

Conciliation Resources, London

Centre for Study of Forgiveness & Reconciliation, Coventry

Moldovan Initiative Committee of Management, Belfast

CCTS Officers:

Chair: Diana Francis

Treasurer: Guus Meijer

Minutes Secretary: Michael Randle

Secretariat: Conciliation Resources
173 Upper Street, Islington,
London N1 1RG, United Kingdom

Tel: +44-(0)20 7359 7728

Fax: +44-(0)20 7359 4081

Email: ccts@c-r.org

Website: <http://www.c-r.org/ccts>