

Dear Reader

This issue offers a varied and interesting menu: an encouraging article on recovery from violence in Sierra Leone; a short account of a network meeting of peacebuilders in Johannesburg; a discussion about the responsibility of powerful countries not to collude with human rights violations for political reasons, and two substantial book reviews. We hope you will find it a good read.

Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone

by Paul Clifford, Associate of Responding to Conflict and Freelance Consultant in Conflict Transformation

Introduction

I have been visiting Sierra Leone since 1998 to undertake work for various agencies, mainly under the auspices of Responding To Conflict (RTC). The brutal civil war there, which lasted more than a decade, brought untold misery. Large numbers of people lost their lives, countless others (from babies through to elderly people) were left with physical and psychological damage. The infrastructure of the country has been devastated and there is a 'lost generation' of children, many of whom were forced to become child soldiers or 'bush wives', i.e. sexual and domestic slaves. Many others simply received no education during the war.

Often at the height of a conflict, international agencies and international staff flee the country. What then frequently goes unrecorded is the work that continues to be done by indigenous NGOs and staff. It is my privilege to have worked with many courageous staff members at the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society (SLRCS) and with some of the communities they serve. The aim of this article is to describe some of the peacebuilding work that SLRCS has been doing.

The work of the Red Cross

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies primarily undertake humanitarian and relief work. Red Cross Societies in wealthier countries often support those in poorer countries. The British Red Cross Society

(BRCS) has a long history of supporting the SLRCS and approached RTC to see if someone could run a workshop for SLRCS to help them think about the work they could most usefully engage in, both during the conflict and, hopefully, in the post-conflict era. I travelled to Freetown in November 1999 to run that workshop.

The work of SLRCS

The staff of SLRCS had been through a particularly traumatic time in 1999. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) had invaded Freetown in January and some staff members were killed. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had been expelled from the country by the Government for allegedly supporting and running guns for the RUF (an allegation strenuously denied by the ICRC).

Some local people took this to mean that SLRCS supported the RUF and attacked and mutilated several members of SLRCS' staff.

SLRCS was primarily engaged with relief and humanitarian work. What struck me at the workshop was that, despite the ongoing war and the traumatic events that affected SLRCS directly, there was an unquenchable optimism that the war would soon be over and that it would be important for SLRCS to engage not only in its traditional relief and humanitarian work but also in peacebuilding. There was a young field officer from Bo (Sierra Leone's second city) who was particularly committed to the peacebuilding work.

BRCS decided to sponsor that field officer on RTC's ten week Working With Conflict (WWC) course in Birmingham. On his return he trained other staff members in what he had learned, and BRCS supported a further five SLRCS staff members to attend the WWC course. They have thus built up a team of staff members trained in working with conflict. These in turn have trained other SLRCS staff members, staff in other agencies, and community members, truly cascading the training in a way that many of us talk about but rarely achieve in practice. The ideas for peacebuilding projects discussed at the 1999 workshop became realities.

In August 2004 I was invited to return to Sierra Leone to help assess the benefits of the RTC training to SLRCS and the communities they serve. What struck me was the excellence of much of the work that SLRCS is doing, and that people in other areas could learn much that could be useful to them. I will describe (largely in SLRCS' own words) the work of two of the peacebuilding projects.

Community Animation and Peace Support (CAPS)

The goal of this project is to strengthen the capacity of war-torn communities for poverty reduction and post war reconstruction.

These communities are faced with:

- Little or no post-war support from other agencies or the government

- High levels of destruction in property and lives
- A high level of division and acrimony (especially occasioned by the war)
- A high level of poverty (especially where capacity has been undermined by the war).

CAPS employs a holistic approach that combines post conflict recovery and traditional development practices which empower communities through cross-cutting activities. Community leadership and stakeholders are trained in peace building and conflict transformation skills. Structures are strengthened for mediation, advocacy and better understanding and respect for Human Rights. Community radio listening is promoted to enhance access to information. Awareness and sensitisation campaigns are carried out on peace and development through community theatre.

To facilitate community healing and cohesion there are fora for sharing war experiences; communal cleansing ceremonies that lead to forgiveness and reconciliation; community festivals, and sporting activities involving collective participation.

Community groups including ex-combatants, war widows and single mothers are trained and supported in income-generating activities. Food security is strengthened by providing community groups with seeds and tools. The groups are trained in Community Based First Aid to prevent casualties and fatalities in a situation where there is limited access to health services. Adult literacy is supported to accelerate development processes. Communities that lack water and sanitation facilities are assisted with the construction of wells and latrines. Communities are also provided with construction kits for the rebuilding of individual houses and other community infrastructure like feeder roads.

Each District has a front line staff of six Animators who are located in the communities where they live, and facilitate the project activities. They are trained to articulate the community's peace and development aspirations. There is also a Project Supervisor in each District, and a national co-ordinator.

Child Advocacy and Rehabilitation (CAR)

It is estimated that 19,000 out of the 75,000 who actively fought in the war were children, most of them forcibly conscripted. In addition to those who fought, over 100,000 children suffered rape and sexual assaults and witnessed the brutal killings of loved ones and neighbours. Thousands of children lost one or both parents. SLRCS started the CAR project to assist in the rehabilitation of children affected by the war, and reintegrate them into child-friendly communities.

The project is directed at children aged 10-18 years who:

- Participated in war-related violence (e.g., as child soldiers)
- Were subjected to war-related violence (e.g., abducted, forcibly conscripted, raped)
- Witnessed extreme war-related violence (e.g., the death of family members).

The project runs rehabilitation centres which children attend weekly from Monday to Friday. A daily meal is provided for the children, which for many of them is the only meal of the day. The children stay for 10 months but their progress is then monitored for a further 6 months to ensure their proper reintegration. Each child is assigned a Care Giver who becomes an 'uncle' or 'aunt'. The Care Givers, who are trained counsellors, give the required psychological support to the children both at the centre and at home.

Each child is also enrolled into a skill of choice, ranging from brick building, concreting and carpentry to tie-dyeing, soap making, catering and tailoring. They attend weekly classes in literacy and numeracy, health and hygiene, physical education, and sexual and reproductive health.

A health clinic is run twice a week at the centres where the children are treated for minor ailments. Some of the beneficiaries are

child mothers whose babies receive care at the centre.

The beneficiary communities are sensitised in child protection to enhance their understanding of the issues faced by their children, in a bid to foster their assistance in rehabilitating and reintegrating the children. Income generating activities are also supported as a way of building the economic capacities of communities ravaged by war.

Each centre has ten Activists, who are a direct link with the beneficiaries. Some of them are responsible for imparting skills, others for community sensitisation activities. They are each assigned fifteen beneficiaries to whom they provide psychosocial support throughout the project cycle. Each centre has two advocacy officers, one responsible for Skills, and one for Community Sensitisation. Each centre is managed by a Project Supervisor and there is a national coordinator.

Conclusion

What particularly impresses me is the holistic approach of both programmes. The CAPS projects take into account the fact that for peace to be sustainable there is a need not only for people to have conflict transformation skills and awareness of Human Rights issues, but for there to be community healing and cohesion, for the means of income generation to be developed, and for people to receive practical assistance in physically rebuilding their communities. The CAR projects recognise that the young people in their care need both psychological support and the basic education and skills they can use to generate income. Also of vital importance is the work to help communities accept the return of the young people and to recognize that they will continue to need support in the future.

The work continues in Sierra Leone and meanwhile other West African countries such as Liberia and Nigeria are seeing what they can learn from the Sierra Leone experience that may be useful in their own countries.

On being effective: Report on the ACTION for Conflict Transformation International Forum, Johannesburg, November 2004

by Carolyn Hayman, Chief Executive, Peace Direct

Despite visa problems, 53 people from 27 countries managed to make it to Jo'burg in beautiful spring weather, with the mauve jacaranda trees in spectacular bloom. ACTION for Conflict Transformation members are a bunch of individualists doing very different kinds of work – some national, some local; some very focussed on conflict itself, others on factors contributing to conflict, such as human rights abuse and lack of economic opportunity.

But three things were really impressive about this group. Firstly, strong shared values – you could sit down with any one of them and you would hear the same words, about the importance of inclusion, of patience and of a total commitment to non-violence. Secondly, an approach that is both very practical and highly principled. And thirdly, ambition. The last two days were devoted to strategies for action that would make a difference, including creating links between truly grass-roots work, undertaken in particular communities, and supra-national initiatives. For example, the Platform for Peace and Development (PAD) has the mission of linking the grass roots with African Union strategists, and it succeeded in being one of only 10 NGOs accredited to the first session of the AU.

A number of interesting issues came up for me, both in general discussions and in particular workshops. Sue Williams focussed our minds on the fact that not all peacebuilding work is equally effective, but that we do know, thanks to research by CDA (The Collaborative for Development Action), what makes work more likely to bear fruit. (Look on their website, www.cdainc.com, for the whole story.) Dekha Ibrahim Abdi drew attention to the fact that while the USA is channelling more of its aid through extremist Christian faith groups, Muslim NGOs are increasingly under threat of being closed down. Not surprisingly, this strikes them as extremely unfair. She also talked about the need for an 'under the radar' fund for work that is too secret to be the subject of formal funding bids – transport costs, for example, to take people to neutral ground outside the area of conflict. I was struck by how negative delegates were about both local and international NGOs – not to mention the 'GNGOs', which have been co-opted by Government, or created as a front. Several people talked about their desire to strike out on their own again and create new institutions with a commitment to service to the people and to transparency.

I was proud that Peace Direct had been able to help to mobilise the funding needed for this event to happen. ACTION runs on the skinniest of shoestrings, yet delivers huge value in supporting its members and sharing expertise. If we are to achieve our dream of shifting government resources from the use of force to conflict prevention, then organisations like ACTION will need to play an increasingly important role.

Serious human rights abuses in other countries: dilemmas facing governments and citizens

by Alan Pleydell, Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW) Programme Manager for the Post-Yugoslav Countries

The topic is a perennial one, sparked in my mind on this occasion by the appalling atrocity in Beslan, N. Ossetia, last September. Not only the atrocity itself, but the bungling self-righteousness and disinformation of the Putin government in handling it – or rather failing even to attempt to handle it – through negotiation, and the resultant staggering loss of life to the local community and beyond. Yet criticism from western countries has been extraordinarily muted, both at the time and later. Despite its scale, it seems already forgotten. Some of the real human cost of the blanket subordination of basic decencies to the claimed necessities of state security, and the apparently casual acceptance of this by Western governments, is revealed in Anna Politkovskaya's books – *A Dirty War* (Harvill 2001), *A Small Corner of Hell* (Chicago, 2004) and *Putin's Russia* (Harvill, 2004), as well as her Guardian article 'Poisoned by Putin' of 9 September 2004.

The Beslan incident recalls the sorry history of the British Government's more general attempts to influence the notoriously brutal and indiscriminate attitude of the Putin government in dealing with what it blandly represents simply as terrorism in the North Caucasus and further afield in Russia – as if there were no intelligible political history or contextual background to the situation. The Putin government has insisted on handling things in its own way, unchecked either by scrutiny or moralistic interference by outsiders, not only from 1994-6, when much information did indeed get out, but again from 1999 to the present, this time with an almost 100% successful news blackout. All the major powers that have signed up to the 'war on terror' have now satisfied themselves that if there is going to be journalism at all, it had better be 'embedded'.

Since 9/11, the 'Global War on Terror' has provided a perfect cover for the hands-off policy asserted by the Russians and accepted without much protest, as far as we know, by Britain, whilst mindless repression, and ever more outraged and outrageous reaction, continue unchecked. In an early press conference, Tony Blair tried to score a point off Putin over his human rights record and was roundly resisted and lectured back for his pains. (He had a similar experience in Syria with Bashir Assad over Israel/Palestine).

There is not much sign that he has tried particularly robustly since. And, given the sobering history of the last two years in Iraq, and all too justly invoked points about glasshouses and stones, it is unlikely to happen again.

A penchant for quiet diplomacy ...

None of this is new. The traditional view behind all of it is the long-asserted belief of successive British Governments (and many others) that it is best to seek change in the behaviour of other governments by quiet and diplomatic 'good offices' behind the scenes, and that the more you ruffle feathers, particularly publicly, the less likely anyone is to entertain your concerns or respond favourably. In international relations, it is often said – quite rightly as a broad truth – that we have to deal with all sorts of unsavoury characters and regimes (not that some of the actions and policies of our own governments are beyond reproach) but that channels must be kept open if there is to be any chance of continued movement or change for the better. Then again, it is held, there may be greater issues at stake and one set of imperatives may in the real world have to be subordinated to another. The crucial thing is to keep the talk going, in the hope of an eventual concession to reasoned persuasion.

Now to typically 'peace loving' people with an attachment to reasonableness, this view has a certain appeal; and for all we know it may in many cases represent what those who propound it really think and feel. It sounds very reasonable – 'softly softly catchee mousee'. But it does rather depend on the genuineness, as well as the at least occasional effectiveness, of the behind-the-scenes approach. And because cast-iron assurances of secrecy may be the price to be paid for securing the safe atmosphere and trust required for negotiations to have a chance of success, the results of the behind-the-scenes approach may be kept under wraps more or less indefinitely. Because of this we, the public, are most of the time unlikely to know what successes this approach has produced in the past.

Yet on the other side of the argument there is at least this to be said: that generations after the issues in question have lost their urgency and when the principals are all dead (for instance with the lapse of 30-year rules), we hear a lot about scandalous private lives and 'dirty' political deals – far less about how significant changes of heart were brought about in serial human rights abusers by means of quiet diplomacy. In addition, there is the notorious example of the decades of collusion of successive British governments with Apartheid, excused by constant and frequently hypocritical reference to the better prospects of the 'softly softly' approach. The ANC government has always been clear that it was public pressure which made the difference.

To be sure, there may well be instances of success achieved though the genuine pursuit of the quiet approach. Indeed, in the field of unofficial mediation there are known examples of restraint being secured by behind-the-scenes diplomacy and the appeal both to reason and humanity, notably in the ending of the Nigerian Civil War. But these are cases where the

broker of the diplomacy was not in any sense engaged in threat, counter-threat or bluffing, and was a genuinely disinterested party.

... or a preference for inaction

The penchant for quiet diplomacy may be genuine and sincere – or on the other hand it may itself be a cover for what is really a preference for inaction. It may also be intended to dampen down public unease or outrage, invoking not only reasonableness and playing the 'trust me, there is a more subtle game afoot of which you know little' card, but also relying on the short attention span of the public with regard to most long-running international issues, and not seriously expecting to be called on to deliver improvement at the end of the day. Or, again, it may simply arise out of a self-deceptive and wholly unrealistic sense of one's own powers of persuasion (c.f. John Kampfner in *Blair's Wars*). Whatever the truth in a particular case, both public pressure and advocacy *and* determined, quiet diplomacy may be called for, together with an open acknowledgement of one's own side's manifest imperfections.

In *Putin's War* Anna Politkovskaya cites what may be a counter to this scepticism in the case of Gerhard Schroeder's very helpful intervention on Russian policy in Chechnya. But looking at the general history of British policy, there is at least room to doubt if our governments really do speak and act out of a profound sense of common humanity and their own fallibility. It is one thing to be moralistic, which can so easily result in an overplayed hand and exposure for hypocrisy; quite another to make the longer and harder attempt to remain consistently moral.

Book Reviews:

Suzannah Linton, *Reconciliation in Cambodia*;

Diana Francis, *Rethinking War and Peace*

Suzannah Linton, *Reconciliation in Cambodia*

Phnom Penh: Documentation Center of Cambodia, 2004. (274 pages)

Reviewed by Andrew Rigby, Director of the Centre for the Study of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

During 2002 the Documentation Centre of Cambodia (DC-Cam) conducted a survey of the Cambodian readers of its monthly magazine, *Searching for the Truth*, to elicit views on issues of justice, accountability, and reconciliation in relation to the abuses committed under the Khmer Rouge regime of Democratic Kampuchea (DK) during the 1970s. Suzannah Linton has used the results of this survey to produce a fascinating review of the many challenges facing Cambodians as they seek to come to terms with the personal and collective horrors of their genocidal past.

As someone with a background in comparative peace and reconciliation studies and a personal, although very 'amateur', interest in Cambodia, I was impressed by the comprehensive scholarship of Linton – evidenced by the range of sources she draws upon in seeking to locate the Cambodian experience within the broader field of transitional justice studies. Whilst the responses to the DC-Cam survey serve as the cue for her reflections, she draws upon a variety of analyses of how different successor regimes have attempted to deal with the legacy of gross human rights abuse, division and collective trauma for the sake of peaceful co-existence and reconciliation.

In most cases the legal and quasi-legal processes and other institutional procedures

associated with transitional justice programmes have followed closely upon the collapse of the old regime. It is one of the 'peculiarities' of the Cambodian case that that such a study should be published a quarter of a century after the displacement of the DK regime, reflecting the lack of substantive progress made in bringing perpetrators of abuse to justice and making appropriate reparations to their victims.

Studies have shown that most state-directed efforts to deal with the legacy of past abuses are variants of three standard approaches: amnesties and official amnesia, purges and prosecutions, and truth commissions. To a significant degree the approach adopted reflects the interests and the balance of power of relevant state and non-state actors during the process of transition. Amnesties and amnesia – an official policy of 'forgive and forget' – is typically pursued by those regimes that have come to power by means of a process of negotiation between competing elites in a situation where the representatives of the old regime can exercise a credible challenge to the new political order if threatened by legal or other sanctions. By contrast, the purging and prosecution of those deemed responsible for past abuses is generally pursued when the new regime feels confident of its power and ability to pursue justice without risking political and social stability, and is driven by an overwhelming public demand for such sanctions. Typically such conditions prevail when the new regime has come to power as a result of a popular comprehensive victory over those who are the potential targets of such a purge.

Whereas trials and purges are aimed at punishing the perpetrators of crimes against their fellow citizens, the prime concern of the truth commission approach to addressing the pains of the past is with the victims. The aim is to identify them, to acknowledge them and the

wrongs done to them, and to arrive at appropriate compensation. The best known examples of this approach include the transition to democratic rule following the military juntas in Argentina and Chile, and the establishment of the post-apartheid regime in South Africa. In general it would seem that the truth commission approach is favoured by regimes that lack either the will or the means to prosecute the perpetrators of political crimes, because of the relative resources controlled by those who would be its chief targets, but where the policy of 'forgive and forget' is not viable because of the depth of division and level of bitterness in society. Such conditions are likely to prevail when the old regime has been displaced by means of a negotiated transfer of power, driven by overwhelming public resentment and disaffection that undermined the capacity of the old state to impose its will.

Whatever variant is pursued, the dominant concern of new regimes is to promote the necessary degree of social order to ensure regime security and legitimacy. Hence, in the case of Cambodia the lack of significant progress towards a coherent programme for transitional justice and reconciliation can be attributed to the interests of the political elites. The main policy thrust has been aimed at bringing an end to the threat of violence from the Khmer Rouge by various means, including the cooptation of senior figures into significant positions in the new regime. In the words of Linton, 'Reconciliation in Cambodia has been used by the elites as a convenient label for power sharing as a solution to ongoing political struggles.' (p.16)

Bringing an end to the threat of a resumption of violence is a necessary component of any *national* reconciliation project. It is unfortunate that this priority can leave many victims of abuse angry at what they see as the impunity enjoyed by those responsible for their suffering and resentful at the lack of appropriate reparations. The evidence from South Africa would seem to indicate that too many victims experienced the truth and reconciliation process almost as a piece of theatre taking place on a public stage far removed from their own lives and experiences. This is the challenge that continues to face Cambodians – how to develop a coherent transitional justice programme that will promote reconciliation not

just at the national level of competing political elites, but at the grassroots levels of the villages, neighbourhoods and families where the pain of the Khmer Rouge years was experienced most directly and most traumatically.

Linton's study, based on the observations of the respondents to the survey, is an exploration of how this process might be progressed. She works with a simple and straightforward definition:

Reconciliation involves the process of learning how to co-exist and work together with people one does not like or is not liked by and coming to terms with personal negativity about one's experiences, whether one be victim or perpetrator. Reconciliation as a process may be simply about assisting people and through that, wider society, to get things back into perspective so that all may lead as normal lives as possible.' (p.15)

She continues in this grounded fashion, observing that there is no magical elixir that can bring about the minimum basis of mutual trust necessary for Cambodians to cooperate together for the sake of a common future. The actual vision of such a future, as sketched out by the respondents and interpreted by the author, embraces a fair and democratic society, free from corruption and violence, where peace and justice are nurtured and protected by the rule of law.

One of the main observations Linton draws from the survey is that in designing a comprehensive transitional justice strategy that will sow the seeds of future harmony, Cambodia's leaders need to involve and engage in open dialogue with people from all walks of life in the formation of a holistic approach that will go beyond a few show trials of elderly Khmer Rouge leaders. She identifies four basic objectives that should inform such a process: '... to do justice, to grant victims the right to know the truth, to grant reparations to victims in a way that recognises their worth and dignity as human beings, and to purge those associated with the repressive regime from public office. It should also aim to prevent the recurrence of such abuses and, to the extent possible, repair the damage they have caused.' (p.31)

How can one 'do justice' in a post-genocide society? For most people in the West justice is understood to have something to do with compensation or 'making right' and holding people to account for their actions – restitution and retribution. But the painful reality in a society like Cambodia is that there can never be anything like a full form of restitution. What has been lost can never be regained. Moreover, there is no way that accounts can be settled with those involved in the torture and unnecessary deaths of their fellow Cambodians – there are far too many of them. Mass trials and prosecutions would destroy the social fabric of the society, even if it were possible to implement such a process. Moreover, studies have shown that in so many cases there can be no clear-cut distinction between the perpetrators of barbaric acts and victims – many of the torturers and killers were themselves separated from their families, brutalised and conditioned to believe absolutely in the power of the regime, and faced certain death if they refused to carry out their orders. The survey revealed that Cambodians themselves are capable of distinguishing between those with greatest culpability and the rank-and-file who were invariably the direct perpetrators of atrocities. As a consequence, a majority of respondents saw one element of 'doing justice' as involving the prosecution of the surviving leadership of the Khmer Rouge, preferably with international involvement because of a lack of faith in the integrity and the capacities of Cambodian jurors.

However, this focus on senior personnel being held to account in a court of law is construed by Linton as representing more than a desire for retribution. She focuses on the 'symbolic justice' of such trials, observing that amongst the respondents,

There were many who pointed to the deterrent effect of trials as a moral lesson, which is linked to the great importance that respondents placed on attaining generational changes in conduct. Trials are seen as having the potential to break the cycle of violence and impunity. This is the use of the judicial process as educational, a deterrent in that what would emerge would be so shocking as to serve as a warning of blind obedience to doctrine, the extreme dangers of authoritarian leadership, and the punishment that would be meted to

individuals for their role in the horrors. (pp. 229-230)

Linton has a background as a specialist in international law and human rights, and she emphasises that one of the main symbolic and educational functions of criminal trials would lie in their representation of the importance of procedural justice and the rule of law in Cambodia. Respondents repeatedly pointed out that they sought an end to the ongoing cycle of impunity and lawlessness in Cambodian society. What they sought was a society governed by the rule of law with courts as the most appropriate forum for dealing with suspected criminals, and in this context rejected ideas of taking personal revenge against those that had harmed them.

The Buddhist teaching that vindictiveness is ended by not being vindictive was also evident in people's approach, and Linton emphasises throughout the book the importance of Cambodia's Buddhist culture in shaping the reconciliation process. One of the basic tenets of Buddhism is that people have to face the consequences of their actions, but it also teaches compassion – the injunction to help wrong-doers abandon their old ways and gain release from the destructive delusions that drive greed and hatred. In the words of one senior Cambodian Buddhist who was interviewed by staff of DC-Cam in 2002, 'Revenge will never end if people solve conflicts through passion, greed, anger and insanity ... The most important things are truth and accountability in order to set an example for other people not to do the same things.' (p.145) It is clear that for many Buddhists in Cambodia the best way to reveal the truth and establish accountability is by means of properly conducted trials. As one respondent phrased it, 'In the law, those who commit crimes must be punished. In Buddhist law, those who commit sinful acts are destined to receive unfortunate results. We suppress vindictiveness by not being vindictive. There must be justice and proper prosecution if we are to live in peace and prosperity.' (p.23)

One of the surprising results of the survey is that there was little support amongst respondents for a Cambodian truth commission as a means of revealing the truth and establishing accountability. One possible reason for this might be a lack of awareness of such

an institutional process, because there was support for a comprehensive commission of inquiry that would help people begin to understand just how and why ordinary people turned into torturers and killers. Respondents made it clear that there was a need for Cambodians to develop an understanding of the root causes of their *auto-genocide*, so that they can begin to explain what for so many remains inexplicable. As Linton concludes, 'all Cambodians of whatever faith and political perspective, need to be part of an effort to create their own record of their own past, in order to reconcile with what happened.' (p.242)

The third pillar in the overall transitional justice programme that Linton attempts to sketch out relates to the issue of reparations for the victims of the past horrors. Here she goes little beyond emphasising the importance of comprehensive mental health and rehabilitation programmes at the grass-roots. It is clear that she sees these primarily as a necessary complement to the kind of wide-ranging commission of inquiry she advocates, and certainly there is evidence from South Africa and elsewhere that the experience of many witnesses to the formal truth commissions was extremely distressing and far from therapeutic, as they were called upon to recount and relive past traumas without appropriate support services. But the victims of the Khmer Rouge years stretch far beyond the bereaved and the survivors of torture. A whole generation suffered direct loss and violence of one form or another during those years, and subsequent generations have been damaged by the ongoing legacy of a culture of violence and impunity, division and poverty. In such a context the most important foundation upon which to build national reconciliation must be a sustained effort to advance social justice. As one respondent expressed it:

National reconciliation is a way leading to stability and peace to develop a society which was abused with wars, and national reconciliation has to be on social justice grounds. A social justice exists only if we promote a culture of respecting human rights, understanding social morality, and carry out legal obligation ... national reconciliation is based on transparency, equality and justice. (p.194)

The fourth guiding objective for a comprehensive transitional justice programme for Cambodia identified by Linton is the purging from public office of those associated with the repressive regime. However, she is forced to accept, however reluctantly, that too many former Khmer Rouge cadres are now in positions of authority within the Cambodian state structures for this to be feasible. She does cling to the hope, however, that alternative forms of accountability might be implemented – that former perpetrators be encouraged to try to make amends in some manner for the wrongs of the past.

Who are to be the key agents in the implementation of such a far-reaching programme of transitional justice? Linton identifies three. The Cambodian government's role should go beyond the administration of criminal trials and other institutional developments to the encouragement of an open political environment and a sustained effort to promote social justice. An important role for the non-governmental organisations and movements of the civil society sector will be to encourage, pressure and assist the state in the fulfilment of its obligations, not least by helping survivors and their families to articulate and express their demands of the government. Linton also suggests that civil society agencies have a particular aptitude and responsibility for working at the grass-roots level, in the space created by processes of accountability to work directly on reconciliation and social repair. The third key agency is the Cambodian people themselves. Again and again respondents emphasised the importance of changes in personal attitudes and behaviour as one of the central elements of any reconciliation process, recognising the need for people to come to terms with the demons from the past and learn to live alongside each other, working towards a common future. In relation to this, Linton engages at various points in the book with the issue of forgiveness as a constituent part of any reconciliation process. Like other authors she concludes that no-one has the right to expect or to require survivors to extend the hand of forgiveness to their persecutors, and that reconciliation in the form of co-existence can take place without forgiveness.

Like any published work, this book has its flaws. It is repetitive and would have benefited

from a firmer editorial hand. At times I felt that the author could not quite decide whether she was writing a research report or a book for a wider lay-readership. Some might question the appropriateness of devoting such a large section of the book to a comprehensive overview of the survey, with details of how the data was collected and processed – and then the responses presented with statistics to two decimal points, graphs and pie-charts. All this might be of interest to the professional social scientist and public opinion pollster – but I could not help thinking that at least part of the motivation was to present the findings as ‘scientific’ with ‘hard facts’ to support the observations and conclusions of the author. I also feel that Linton places too great a faith in the healing power of the rule of law that reflects her own legal background. Moreover, whilst not an expert on contemporary Cambodian history, I think she is too dismissive of the serious threats to national peace and security faced by the government over the past decade. I also found it somewhat contradictory that she affirms the need for a purge of public officials who had been part of the Khmer Rouge apparatus, but then acknowledges that such a cleansing operation would not be feasible. I was also disappointed that she failed to give consideration to some of the more innovative proposals for establishing accountability that have been suggested by scholars such as Craig Etcheson.

But setting these reservations aside, there is a rigor and a level of integrity to this work that means it will become one of the indispensable resources to be consulted by those charged with directing the path of national reconciliation in Cambodia. The survey on which it is based was a significant attempt to engage with Cambodians on issues relating to reconciliation in their country. And therein lies the significance of the research, as an indication of the range of views and the issues that many Cambodians believe need to be addressed as their country progresses along the path of reconciliation. As such, this is a valuable and stimulating book. It is perhaps inevitable that it will now enter the political minefield of national and international debate about how to deal with Cambodia’s traumatic past. The real challenge is how to take these issues and debates back to the people themselves, to continue and extend the engagement and the dialogue that brought

about the research in the first place, so that whatever the features of the overall transitional justice programme that emerges, the Cambodian people themselves will feel the degree of ownership necessary for the vision of a shared future to become a reality.

Diana Francis, *Rethinking War and Peace*

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This book attempts to get down to the fundamentals. It argues that the human institution of war, and the general state of mind which excuses it, whatever the apparent plausibility of arguments from 'necessity' in particular cases, has led us all into a situation of perpetrating and suffering mounting ruin and disaster on a colossal scale, for which there is simply no excuse. This is especially so once it is realised that the great brunt of the suffering is borne ever more overwhelmingly by civilians, particularly women and children, in the poorest parts of the world, as well as by the soldiers themselves. Yet war is avoidable. It is our own actions and practices that we are talking about, and our culture of justification – not some alien incubus that we imagine has settled on our shoulders like the Old Man of the Sea. Unless we all, whoever we are, consistently commit to a cumulative and collaborative effort of radically challenging and changing our assumptions, thoughts and practices, our humanity (what it means to be minimally decent), cannot be rescued intact – even if those of us who are better off and physically more safely situated happen to manage to fix our own survival. The obligation and responsibility to find the way out of the appearance of the necessity of war and the ubiquity of its disasters lie equally with everyone. (War and disaster are really synonymous – not just accidentally related – you can't have the one without the other.) It does not fall simply on those who by traditional inclination or upbringing find themselves already 'naturally' committed to opposing it.

The immediate situation from which the book arises is the central role of the British Government in the war on Iraq – and before that Afghanistan and Kosovo: the ongoing, accelerating and expanding violence of the wars, first of the post-Cold War world, and now of the post 9/11 world, each of them

represented as necessary and, of course, successful. It is no accident that there has been a plethora of books of this subject, effectively from the usual suspects on each side, pro and con, mainly talking past one another as usual. But this is something different. It arises out of the author's intense concern with the immediate issue in which we, as citizens, find ourselves implicated. It carries the passion and conviction of a lifelong activist committed to empowering ordinary people stuck in hideous situations (who, paradoxically, because of their positive commitment to transformative thought and action, are not stuck) to work their way out of the trap of violence. She is angered by the self-righteous and thoughtless adoption of attitudes and policies which everywhere deepen and spread those situations, whilst purporting to solve them.

Yet the author is not primarily concerned with blame, or indeed with asserting any special virtue on the part of the more pacifistically inclined. Though she powerfully attacks the systematic mendacity and misrepresentation regularly and deliberately deployed to support the notion that there is 'often' no other way but the 'clinical' application of violence, the book broadens out to explore the entire field of potential citizens' action and effort, intellectual and practical, that needs to take place to tackle the situation. And the problem to be addressed is us, humanity in the round, not 'them'. Therefore it is self-transformation that is required, individual and collective, of ourselves and our institutions, with all the destructive assumptions they embody.

The first step in the argument is to nail the lie that contemporary war is a success in its own terms. Take Kosovo, for example: the intervention was supposed to forestall a massive refugee crisis, but it precipitated one. Now, nearly six years after the act, the situation of the country is desperate, unresolved and intractable, tinder-box dry, with great and realistic fears of a return to large-scale violence. Or the Second World War, which killed over 40 million people, failed even to prevent the invasion of Poland, let alone the later systematic genocide, and laid the ground for the Cold War. Even in the extreme case where appalling and mounting terror need to be resisted or overcome somehow, there is a massive disproportion between the benign

intention of the armed response to fascism and the reality of the outcome. And, we are reminded; in the complexity of war there are always many other less benign factors in play which have precious little to do with an altruistic concern for afflicted populations.

Secondly, the argument turns to culture and psychology. The assumption that violence resolves conflicts satisfactorily is historically and socially constructed, maintained and reinforced. The question of individual and collective identity is central to this. And it is deeply embedded in traditional gender roles. In most cultures around the world, including our own, boys are routinely inducted in the understanding that status and worth are to be found in the capacity to dominate. In the author's view, the apex of this culture of domination is the institution of war, gaining and maintaining one's own and one's clan or country's 'honour' by coercive and violent means, supported by all the studied contempt for others and outsiders that this means. Likewise girls have been routinely trained in subservience, frequently being violently reduced to the position of chattels. In wartime they are most often placed in support roles for the maintenance of collective superiority over a country's neighbours. War and gender are profoundly interlinked.

But if the culture of domination is indeed constructed and maintained to protect and advance particular oppressive world-views and interests, it must mean that it is a matter of choice, and that other choices could have been and can be made. The key here is starting to believe that there indeed may be a choice. Once believing this, one is able, at least, to start conceiving the possibility of alternatives, and to begin to act differently. This goes for both women and men, for all people in all cultures.

There is an extended section on the traditional ethics of war and the varieties of 'just war' argument. The most powerful part concentrates on the inherent and deep contradiction between the values of peacetime on the one hand and those of war preparation and fighting on the other. The author attacks a form of ethical reasoning which is effectively a sophisticated version of the notion that the end justifies the means. Amongst other things, the psychological deformation required to train people to kill is so ruinous as entirely to

undercut and deny whatever good is claimed to be the goal. Put bluntly, 'the prohibition against killing per se is a fundamental one'. One cannot advance good by doing things on a huge scale that are ordinarily understood to be categorically evil. That makes oneself and one's society part of the structure and dynamic of evil, and there is no way of insulating or immunising oneself from the fact – despite all the rituals which attempt to achieve such moral immunity. One might temporarily achieve it psychologically, by the process of denial, but the fact remains.

Light is then thrown on the history of nonviolent resistance to evil and 'standing up for good'. We are reminded of many instances of the courage and fundamental integrity shown by ordinary people around the world in standing up, unarmed, to evil and superior physical force, not only as a token but effectively, in particular cases, in seemingly impossible circumstances – including in Nazi Germany and the countries under its occupation. It surely tells us something that many of the instances quoted are simply not popularly known. If indeed rare, they are far more common and often far more effective, even in the most extreme situations, than our public culture has generally allowed us to know. This is another reflection of the fact that propaganda on behalf of the assumption of the effectiveness of violence is far better funded and supported than the exploration of alternatives. There is also an examination of the growth of people power and of international solidarity movements in more recent times.

The growth of international communications – and person to person communication – leads to further hope in the midst of the violence. Everywhere the traditional forms of collective identity – racial, cultural, religious and gender stereotypes, maintained by unfamiliarity and ignorance as well as by force – are broken up by the plurality of new experiences and acquaintance. A growing, tangible awareness of the thick web of interdependence renders the old 'identities' more and more implausible. In the midst of violence and mayhem comes a growing and deepening sense of human identity and a common identification of self with humanity in all its incidental forms.

So far so good. For those of us who have lingering or considerable doubts about the

moral feasibility or indeed responsibility of a wholly non-violent or rather non-coercive stance in all circumstances (the two concepts tend unfortunately to be conflated), the book is somewhat short on a detailed analysis of the real and deep dilemmas facing governments and international institutions such as the UN (rather than private citizens) at critical junctures in and around the occurrence of actual or imminent massacres and other large-scale violent abuses inflicted on sections of the internal populations of some states, be it Rwanda or ex-Yugoslavia. At the eleventh hour (and, short of the full realisation of the reform of human institutions that the book calls for, the eleventh hour is still always potentially with us) it is not unreasonably believed by many, amongst whom I would include myself, that there are at least some forms of coercive intervention which are morally inescapable, and therefore in the last analysis legitimate, if the disaster of massacre is to be forestalled, and for whom complete inaction (or at most purely symbolic action) at such a point seems morally intolerable. And if this is really so, since 'ought' implies can, then minimally it presupposes sanctioning some form of armed preparedness in some specified circumstances. This begs huge questions, since it reintroduces the prospect of some sort of arsenal authoritatively held in reserve against such cases, and the knowledge of how to use it, even if only 'preventively' – which once conceptually or practically allowed could break its bounds and usher back in the entire escalatory cycle of suspicious armed preparedness and counter-preparedness.

However, in the final chapter, the author turns to action and asks what we can do to effect change. She produces a random list of 38 things which people as active citizens can individually choose to be involved in, as a practical contribution to challenging and deconstructing the embedded mythology and practice of war and the ideas that support it. These suggestions range from exposing the reality of militarism's destructiveness and cruelty to using every means available to awaken people's sense of power, responsibility and connectedness.

Diana Francis has written a brave and noble book. It deserves a very wide audience.

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