

Dear Readers,

Here we are again, after a long gap.

This issue of our Newsletter is devoted to a recent seminar, the first in a series about post-war peacebuilding. It is composed of the text of the paper on which the seminar was based and (starting on page 15) an account of the seminar itself.

We hope it makes interesting reading, and that it will stimulate interest in the seminars that are to follow – see the back page for details.

Conflict Transformation – from Violence To Politics

by Diana Francis

This paper has been written for a series of seminars designed to explore what is necessary to move from violent conflict to something which might be described as peace. The idea began with a discussion in the CCTS (Committee for Conflict Transformation Support) around the concept and practice of ‘reconciliation’. Discomfort was expressed at what seemed to some the cosy and sanctimonious ring of the word and its connotations. It also seemed too ambitious a goal for the harsh realities of the violent intra-state conflicts with which many members were grappling (and it is on intrastate conflicts that this paper will focus). If reconciliation were a realistic aim after complex, long and bloody conflicts, it would, it was argued, come a long way down the road. What we needed to look at was how you ever got on that road in the first place. That meant, essentially, getting from a situation where conflict was being pursued through wide scale violence, to one where it was being dealt with through civil politics. I have added the word ‘civil’ to the ‘politics’ of my title, because according to Von Clausewitz, war is the continuation of politics by other means. But war is not just a continuation of anything. It adds a completely new dimension to conflict, with its own dynamics, and its politics are of another kind. It is the destructiveness of war, and the human misery it entails, that underlie the aspirations of conflict transformation and are the basis for the concern to make the transition to other methods of conflict management. To borrow Guus Meijer’s words, ‘Conflict transformation aims at changing the social organisation and execution of power. In situations of violence, power is organised and exercised by force – by power *over*; in civil politics, power is exercised by consent and/or consensus – by power *with*.’

It occurs to me now that this debate, as I have summarised it, might seem to suggest that ‘real things’, political and material, were being favoured over psychological needs. If so, that is a dichotomy I would want to deny, or perhaps rather to bridge. Since political decisions and actions are taken by human beings of the usual complexity, but in contexts bigger than themselves, to try to divorce thoughts and feelings, and their effects, from other mechanisms seems foolish. But this in turn raises questions about chickens and eggs (what is primary and where to begin) and about different levels and

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aspects of social being and political life. Johan Galtung (1990) has posited the notion of a triangle of categories or spheres for thinking about violence: cultural, structural and direct (behavioural). As categories go, these seem useful. I would argue that moving from a situation characterised by direct violence to one in which 'normal' political life was possible

would necessitate attention to all three spheres. If 'culture' is interpreted not only as long term, underlying patterns of thought and expression, but also the day to day public (and private) rhetoric which is used to promote war and peace, and the prevailing emotional climate within which politicians operate, then it has a vital role to play, even in the short term. And although politicians may decide for 'the people', acting on behalf of or in spite of them, even the most powerful war lords need popular support, or at least people to do their bidding; so it makes no sense to think of a return to any kind of peace simply in terms of the apex of Lederach's (1995) well-known social/ political pyramid. People at all levels must be moving along the road away from violence and towards some kind of civilian co-existence.

Although Galtung's category of structures might appear to be a matter for the longer term, without some civil structures in place, albeit temporary and/or rudimentary, it is hard to see how any transition can be made from the rule of violence to some other kind of governance. (This is a problem facing Kosov/a at the moment.)

It is hard to escape the conclusion that chickens and eggs are inseparable, or indeed indistinguishable, and that everything needs to happen at once. Practically speaking, this will mean edging forwards, as possible, on all fronts. According to current dominant thinking, the primary unit for structures and for the organisation and structuring of civil power is the state. If that is so, recognised state boundaries are needed to provide the overall structure for intra-state civil politics, and those are often at issue, with major population groups straddling existing boundaries. Whether the independent and 'free-standing' state is the best and only unit for political organisation is open to question. It could be that new federal and confederal arrangements could, in some instances, offer more satisfactory and stable structures for the organisation of politics on a regional basis.

In view of all the categories and levels of necessary provision and/or change required for a transition from violence to politics, it seems a tall order to offer anything like a comprehensive overview, or any kind of clarity, within the compass of a not-too-long paper. Maybe, however, the omissions and confusions will be as stimulating as what seems to make sense. Given the breadth of my remit, examples I give will necessarily be briefly alluded to rather than extensively examined. This can be corrected when we meet. I propose to address first the question of necessary conditions for making the initial transition from violence to politics or from war to peace. I shall then expand a little on the need for psychological change, particularly collective, and the reintegration of disintegrated societies. Thirdly I shall discuss the need for establishing participatory politics, and the dilemmas which that implies, and fourthly I shall look at the economic and social foundations which democracy requires, and the role of outside governments and agencies. In the fifth section I shall take a brief look at the question of culture and raise the overarching questions of gender and global justice. I shall conclude by reflecting on the relationship between the needs of peace which I have identified and the realities with which would-be peacemakers have to work. As I understand it, my task is to give a reasonable summary of current thinking, so that we do not have to spend all our time covering already charted territories when we meet, but will share the same map, even if we dispute the way it depicts things. At the same time, I have the job of pointing to some of the difficulties, contradictions, shaky assumptions and unanswered questions which the map reveals; so at the end of each section and of the paper itself, I shall indicate what I think are key issues or questions which need to be addressed.

Necessary conditions for the resumption of civil politics

Ceasefire leading to political settlement

Perhaps the most obvious precondition for a return to the political, as opposed to military, management of conflict is the achievement of a ceasefire and the start of a process leading to some kind settlement. The difficulties and complexities of reaching that point are not the subject of this paper. However, I shall discuss some of the elements which will need to characterise agreements made.

Inclusiveness

Ideally, the ceasefire and subsequent settlement will have been negotiated and agreed by all major players, with the backing of their constituencies. If the terms for ending hostilities are imposed through the outright victory of one side, or dictated by one side because of its overwhelming superiority in terms of power; or if they are imposed by an outside power, according to its own interests and judgements, the commitment of those who consider themselves to be adversely affected by the settlement, to living in accordance with its terms, is likely to be limited. In international conflicts, victors and vanquished have to live together only in the broadest sense; in internal conflicts they have to do it literally, and it is important that not only all the main military protagonists but as high a proportion as possible of the population at large, and of different groups within it, should support the settlement which has been agreed. Chief Buthelezi and his Zulu supporters could have wrecked the chances of peace in South Africa. The shift in UK government policy, from excluding 'the men of violence' from talks, to including them in the still perilous peace process, was a crucial step in the direction of ending the rumbling war in the north of Ireland. In the negotiations between the PLO and the Israeli Government, the doing of a deal which failed to meet the aspirations of the majority of Palestinians, as well as the non-delivery of even those concessions made by the Israeli government, led to growing resistance to the agreement and the growth of support for Hamas.

Best/ least bad alternative; incentives

In this last case, many Palestinians commented, when the deal was first done, that it was hard to settle for so little after so much suffering. Even those who signed must have felt this, but decided it was the best they could do and better than the continuation of a war they could not win. Their power in relation to the state of Israel was insufficient for them to do better. The impoverishment and psychological scarring caused by war are never likely to find compensation, since they represent total loss, which is the cost of war itself. The original causes of the conflict are often overtaken in magnitude by its effects and it is hard, if not impossible, for any settlement to make adequate amends for the harm done, whether physical or emotional.

In order for political leaders to reach agreements, there need to be incentives for them to do so: pressure, or at least acquiescence, from an adequate proportion of their constituency, and some kind of prospect for their own future which is good enough (or as little bad) as to make peace more attractive than the continuation of war – whether in terms of their own power or security, or in terms of their more altruistic aspirations. This is often difficult to achieve without unduly rewarding selfish violence, or relying for the reestablishment of politics on clearly despotic and unreliable people.

Constituencies and pressures

The development of a strong peace constituency will not only support the settlement of a conflict, but make the successful implementation of any settlement much more likely. For instance, the support for the political settlement of the conflict in South Africa has so far carried the new government through what is inevitably an extremely difficult period.

One difficulty in ensuring that there is adequate support for a proposed settlement is that negotiations often require the political space provided by secrecy, and that this runs counter (at least temporarily) to the need for leaders to inform their constituencies and be accountable to them. Although this is a problem, one can think of possible ways in which it can be addressed. A more daunting difficulty is that the will of a very large peace constituency may be ignored by warlords, or whoever commands the fighting. It may be in many ways undesirable, but it is nonetheless true, that often the pressure to reach a settlement comes from powerful outsiders. Then it is to be hoped, at least, that they are motivated by a degree of real care for all the people of the region and understand their needs and views; but it remains hard to progress from the dynamics of war, perpetuated in the imposition of 'peace' by *force majeure*, to the dynamics of democratic and inclusive politics.

Addressing causes of violence

Sometimes the original causes of a war seem to have at least as much to do with demagoguery and personal ambition on the part of politicians (as in the former Yugoslavia) as with any underlying injustice; but the fighting has been so bloody and bitter that it has irrevocably altered

relationships within an entire region. In other situations, the original causes of war remain fundamental, and it is vital that they should be addressed in any settlement. So the question of land distribution remains a matter of injustice and a cause of conflict in Zimbabwe – albeit used for his own purposes by President Mugabe; and in South Africa gross inequalities of wealth remain a cause of tension and violence.

Addressing the status of refugees and internally displaced people

One aspect of violent conflict which is clearly a result rather than a cause of it (though related to causes), is the large scale displacement of people from their homes. Any political agreement to end violent conflict will need to address their status and rights. In conflicts focussed on ethnic identity, the return of refugees is likely to be difficult, not only for security reasons, as in Kosovo/a, but because it may tip the demographic balance against those who remain. For instance, in Abkhazia, the return of Georgian refugees would make the Abkhaz a small minority again, in what they consider as their own country. (The Abkhaz refuse to address the refugee question until the constitutional issue has been settled. The Georgian government will not negotiate about the constitution until the refugee question has been addressed.)

Security and enforcement

The first fruits of a settlement should be the ending of large-scale violence and an immediate increase in physical and psychological security on all sides. Without these, it is impossible for real progress to be made on other fronts. For such an increase in security to be accomplished, it will be necessary for decisions made at the top to be implemented on the ground, which in turn implies a strong political will and effective procedures to ensure follow-through and monitoring. Fighters will need to be disarmed, demobilised and psychologically, socially and economically reintegrated into society. Civilian police will need to be (re)trained and their performance carefully monitored. These requirements are easily named. The current situation in Kosovo/a illustrates the difficulties of bringing them into reality, even (or perhaps especially) where a large enforcement agency is present. In a war, fighters are seen and see themselves as society's primary actors. Once it is over, they have no real status, no practical role and often no emotional stake in the peace. In Zimbabwe, the unmet needs of war veterans remain a source of both political conflict and violence.

Outside monitors, peace-keepers or peace-enforcers may have a role to play in preventing a return to violence and in helping build confidence and increasing the security of groups who are, or perceive themselves to be, particularly vulnerable; but it is hard for them to impose peace against the will of forces inside the country, both the mass of the population or those who control armies. The situation in Sierra Leone deteriorates as I write; and in Kosovo/a the international determination, so amply backed by troops, to see a multiethnic democracy in place, is no match for the understandable desire of many Albanians to be rid of their former oppressors and exact vengeance or settle scores where possible.

Our experience of working at the NGO level in situations of great violence will have been, on the whole, an experience of helplessness and frustration – of seeing all our partners' and our efforts repeatedly blown out of the water.

Questions:

How inclusive does a settlement have to be, or who, if anyone, needs to be excluded, if it is to be politically sustainable and morally defensible? Who does and should decide? How far is it necessary, or possible, to reward violence in the shaping of a settlement (and in 'justice' processes which follow)? Do our local partners and we have any role at this stage? What is the proper role of outside forces, military or civilian, UN or other, in providing security for the implementation of a settlement?

Repairing the psychological and social fabric

Dealing with past; power, responsibility and what to do with them

The settling of scores is not only a private matter. It can be argued that where atrocities have been committed (beyond, that is, the 'acceptable' atrocities of which war is composed), those who should be held most responsible are those at the top of the line of command. Yet it is usually these very people who are needed to sign up for the peace, or at least to acquiesce in it – as was the case with Slobodan Milosevic (and Augusto Pinochet, who had waged a 'low intensity' war against his people). This is a very poisonous nettle to grasp, representing both a practical and a moral dilemma. It is often asserted that there can be no peace without justice, but it is equally true that there can be very little justice without peace, and that to some degree one is often bought at the price of the other.

The notion of 'restorative justice' (Kraybill, 1996; Rigby 2000) seems to offer some help here, with its emphasis on the need to repair lives and the relationships which make society workable. The idea of retribution seems to carry an energy which runs counter to peace; yet it is what many victims and their relatives long for. In some situations, as in Latin America or South Africa, it is relatively easy to distinguish between 'the people' and 'the oppressors', perpetrators and victims of crimes; but in others, so many have been in some way complicit with an oppressive system (as in East Germany), or even involved in mass violence (as in Rwanda), that to try to divide the guilty from the innocent would ultimately be to tear apart a whole society.

Although there is clearly no easy or comfortable answer to these questions, there do seem to be identifiable elements of what can help individuals and societies to move forward in spite of them.

Knowing and acknowledgement

Knowing as far as possible what has happened, for instance to dead or disappeared relatives, so that it does not feel as if the truth is being disguised, denied or withheld, and having what is known publicly acknowledged, is one such element. Accounts from South Africa and Chile illustrate how hard it is to accept that in return for 'truth', the perpetrators of crimes have been granted impunity.

Apology

Apology, if it is seen as a sign of genuine repentance and accompanied by some act of reparation or restitution, can play a part.

Reparation

Some kind of practical service or financial reparation may be required from those who have committed crimes to those who have been their victims.

Compensation

Financial compensation from government, in the form of pensions, for instance, as in Chile, may provide the means of support for victims, and is therefore important; but it is unlikely to feel like justice (see Roberta Bacic, 2000). (For governments to make the kind of payments that might begin to feel as if they measured up a little to the immensity of what people have suffered would be beyond the means of most governments, especially in countries suffering the after-effects of war.)

Punishment

The punishment of those identified as particularly responsible can act as a sign of public acknowledgement, at the national or international level, that certain behaviours are intolerable, and may assuage the feelings of those who have suffered most (though here I admit to personal unease

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about the selection of people to punish in situations where it is known to be inevitable that most who have committed crimes will remain unpunished).

Rituals

Rituals of cleansing or purification may have a part to play, too. In situations where there is no way of restoring what has been lost or destroyed, and a strong need to begin to restore community so that life can go on, symbolism may be the best and indeed the only means of making that possible. I remember hearing an account of an Inkatha and an ANC community coming together in a mass act of purification to seal a peace between them, since they agreed that many people on each side had been involved in previous killings, and that this was a matter for their whole communities, together. I also remember seeing on television a young man in Mozambique, who had murdered several people from his village, returning to it and performing certain rituals of purification and in return being accepted back as if nothing had happened. At the time this seemed scarcely credible; but it seems that people have the ability to devise ways of managing their relationship to events and to each other, and, having devised them, to make them work. It is not possible to separate the spiritual from the practical. At an international trainers' gathering once, I was struck by the words of a colleague from Chile, who said that reconciliation was the remaking of community, and that in her society community included the dead as well as the living. There could be no going forward without their being acknowledged and in some way restored to their rightful place in society.

Recovery from trauma

The social impact of the personal scarring occasioned by war is evidenced in many societies, including the United States where the crime rate among veterans of the Vietnam War is extraordinarily high. Although this may not be seen as the most urgent question to address – not necessary for getting from violence to politics – the long-term stability of social and political life will be affected by it. Western therapeutic methods, focussed on individuals, are unlikely to be either appropriate or feasible in more communitarian societies, or where large numbers are involved; but in, for instance, the countries of former Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone, small organisations have been formed to work with traumatised communities to help them process the horrors that they have witnessed and suffered. I also remember a moving newspaper account of a Rwandan teacher who shared his own suffering with the children in his school, giving them the chance to talk about and depict what they had been through. To ensure that such processes provide a way of dealing with grief and trauma, rather than fuelling anger and hate, requires care, sensitivity and courage on the part of those who facilitate them – who have often themselves been traumatised.

Perhaps what is most helpful to most people, in returning to 'normal' life and relationships, is to get on with the business of it: reconstructing homes, planting crops, starting to trade again, re-opening schools. I am constantly astonished by the will of people to go on living their lives and coping with the impossible – even to find a measure of contentment – after the most terrible cataclysms.

(Re)integration of refugees/ displaced people

One category of people, often very large, who, like the dead, need to be restored to an acceptable place in post-war society, is that of refugees, whether they have been displaced within or between states. While they remain displaced and excluded from 'normal' life, not only is there no peace or justice for them, but they will remain a source of tension and pressure, both socially and politically. The ideal of 'return' may or may not be a realistic or desirable option, depending on the circumstances of their departure, the length of the war which drove them out, or the situation which pertains in the place they left; but there may be no real place for them either in the place to which they have fled.

They may (as in the case of Hutu refugees from Rwanda) also include in their number those who have been involved in atrocities at home. If any group which has been driven out is to be rehabilitated, it will be necessary for the crimes that have been committed by some of its members to be acknowledged and dealt with, so that it can be seen that a distinction can be made between the group as a whole and certain individuals within it. (Some Roma leaders have insisted on this point in relation to Kosovo/a.)

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Although in both human and political terms the status and needs of refugees are of great significance, this is one of the most difficult aspects of implementation in any post-settlement

context. After extreme violence, the fear and loathing surrounding the question of return are likely to be intense, and after any considerable time has elapsed, conflicts over property, which would be hard to handle in any situation, are potential dynamite. The wonder is that resettlement ever happens at all.

The reintegration of refugees requires provision at the top political level, at the level of local authorities, police etc. and at the level of neighbours and families. One illustration of what can be done by NGOs is the work of a small project in East Slavonia, called 'The Bench we Share', which facilitates first meetings between estranged neighbours and family members, and promotes community projects which involve members of different ethnic groups (those who left and those who stayed) who wish to work together to address common problems. This is slow, painstaking work, but seems to produce real results at a local level.

Community relations work

The kind of community relations work which is seen as important in violence ('conflict') prevention – promoting intergroup understanding and undertaking joint efforts to meet social needs – can play a role in repairing relationships after violent conflict. Facilitation from outside may be helpful initially, where relationships are very tense. I am interested in exploring the potential of community groups to play an additional, political role in supporting human rights and the politics of tolerance.

Role of education and the media

Public education is likely to be an area of contention after (and indeed before) civil war: who has the right to be head teacher or dean, whether schools will be for all ethnic and other groups, whether language arrangements will change, how history will be taught, and whether recent events will be taboo, or included in a particular way. It is easy for schools and universities to be battlegrounds. At the same time, establishing an inclusive and tolerant ethos in schools and other educational establishments, and drawing in parents, can help in the move away from patterns of hostility towards patterns of co-existence. The return to any tolerable ease in intergroup relationships, after widespread intergroup violence, is likely to be a long process.

The public rhetoric of politicians and of the media will do much to nurture or damage growing trust. NGOs (like Radio Contact in Pristina) that work through and with the public media can play a vital role in recreating intergroup communication and confidence. Outside support for such efforts, both moral and financial, can be important. Media work which challenges stereotypes and political hegemony can take a great deal of courage and commitment. It is important, however, that the will for these activities, and judgements about what is possible, come from inside the situation rather than from outside.

The maintenance of security

It is vital that the process of social recovery is as little as possible disrupted and set back by renewed outbreaks of violence. At the same time, the relaxation of social tension will reduce the likelihood of such outbreaks, or aid in their containment. To establish 'trouble-shooting' bodies and mechanisms at the local level could be an important contribution in this. (See Howard Clark, 1999)

Questions:

How is it possible to cope with the effects of compromises made in order to achieve an ending of violent hostilities? What are the meanings of 'justice', what is its relationship to peace, and is there a workable formula for balancing the two? Is repairing relationships a priority? Can it be accelerated by deliberate efforts, or is its achievement, when it happens, a function of time and of progress in other areas?

Establishing participatory politics

Democracy?

I chose the phrase 'participatory politics' because of my discomfort with the unquestioning use of the word 'democracy', aware of its neo-colonial connotations and of the defects in the Western systems held up as models for 'the rest'. Nonetheless, if conflicts are to be processed through politics, and the processing is to be inclusive, rather than discriminatory or exclusionary, it will be necessary to develop political processes, structures and cultures which can make possible the participation of all a country's people in the public decisions and actions which affect their lives, whatever their language or ethnic, religious or other identity. (I realise that in some cultures it is possible that 'the people' might be content with a benevolent autocracy, but my own values lead me to question the likelihood of this. And acquiescence and contentment are two different things. See James Scott, 1990.) Yet in many countries there are no traditions of institutions for state wide, inclusive political systems, and to begin to establish them in the wake of widespread violence is a tall order.

Politics and identity

The organisation of political life in countries with differing major population components is in any case not an easy matter. To do it without any reference to identity, or to cultural or tribal affiliation, is an alien concept in many societies (including Northern Ireland). At the same time, organising party politics around identity, while it transfers antagonisms from the military to the political arena, is to perpetuate divisions which have already proved deadly, making political victory or loss a potentially explosive matter. Although in the UK a 'winner takes all' oppositional system may have something to recommend it (as well as major disadvantages), it is unlikely to be other than disastrous where the winning party represents one particular tribe or clan (see Assefa 1993) and the leader so elected is honour bound to employ people from that group in every post over which he (or she, but 'he' it is likely to be) has jurisdiction. In such a case, a voting and governmental structure which provides for the representation of all groups would seem essential. The tyranny of a majority must still feel like tyranny to those on the receiving end, and exclusion is exclusion.

Regional autonomy may provide some kind of a solution, when tribal or ethnic divisions follow clear geographical lines; but in many countries there will be minorities present within any chosen unit of government and finding ways for them to be represented within that unit will remain a challenge. At some level, a choice will have to be made between an emphasis on individual rights and responsibilities on the one hand, and collective identities and group representation on the other.

The political regulation of conflict

According to Miall, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse (1999, 115), one of the important functions of democratic systems and structures is to 'institutionalise and regulate political conflict' and to provide 'rule-based methods of settling disputes, eg. majority voting, consensus decision-making etc.'. (See also Hampshire 2000.) This is to make possible the establishment of what Francis and Ropers (1997) call a 'civilised conflict culture' – one in which conflict is regarded as a civil matter and dealt with through constitutionally established processes. It is therefore vital that the political and legal systems which are established are ones which can successfully manage the structural conflicts within a society. Whether that is done through a system of village representation or a system of opposing parties (ie the Western model) is secondary. It is not clear to me that a consensual style of politics is de facto worse than an oppositional style. It does, however, seem highly desirable that there should be room for disagreement and that the personal power of politicians should not exceed the power of the electorate to hold them accountable. It is also essential to social well-being and stability that the business of government is carried out effectively, with some widely acceptable balance being struck between the inevitably competing goods of personal rights and freedoms on the one hand, and social protection and provision on the other.

Accountability and corruption

If politicians are to be held accountable, conflicts managed and crimes prevented or dealt with, laws or rules, and a system for their enforcement, will need to be in place, widely recognised and respected, and not liable to interference. Corruption is a major threat to democratic processes and public accountability in many societies, at the best of times. The social, political and economic chaos that accompanies war enlarges the space in which corruption and crime can operate. Once corruption has made its way into the social and political fabric, it is hard to find any place from which to start in order to begin to eradicate it. If corruption has a hold at the top, then it is even harder. The need for honest leadership is fundamental. Systems of checks and balances, transparent structures and procedures, may go some way to addressing this problem. This is, however, a matter of cultural, as well as structural change, requiring the linking of honesty to honour.

The role of civil society

One of the ways in which political leaders and governments can be held accountable is through the activities of groups outside the official political structures, a vocal and organised populace or 'civil society'. To be active in this way can take a great deal of courage in societies where violence has been widespread. It is amazing and heartening that in the most difficult and dangerous of circumstances there are 'ordinary people' who are willing to take the risks of political and social activism. They seem to provide a continuous thread of decency in the worst of circumstances, advocating and protecting human rights, providing a voice, and services, for disempowered groups, providing education and training for political involvement and conflict management and pursuing particular goals through public pressure and the political system. The development of such organisations and activities promotes a culture of social and political involvement, as well as having the power to influence public opinion.

Political cynicism

In countries where past and current experience of political systems and politicians is very negative, those who are engaged in the activities of 'civil society' are often understandably cynical about engagement in party politics. This cynicism is a serious obstacle to the establishment of an honest and responsible political culture and system, leaving Politics, by and large, to a less desirable set of people, motivated more by personal ambition than commitment to the public good. The moral rehabilitation of direct political involvement (capital 'P' politics) is vital to democracy, but very hard to achieve.

Media role

The public media have a potentially constructive and powerful role to play in setting the tonal context for politics, providing a forum for measured and serious debate and holding politicians to account. In the West we tend to talk a great deal about the importance of 'free media'. Free of what? In Britain, for instance, the privately controlled media are largely free of government interference, but subject to the control of owners who have their own views, interests and values to promote. This gives, arguably, undue power to capital; but the media have a perfectly honourable role to play in communicating particular viewpoints, interpreting events for particular constituencies and promoting values and political agendas. What does, however, seem possible and important is that different voices should be allowed to be heard, that someone should speak for the voiceless, and that the media should not be used as a vehicle for deliberate lies and distortions or to foment hatred and violence. That raises the question of control and the possibility of 'benevolent' censorship and brings us back to the question of balancing individual freedoms with the public good. I suspect that there is no society which does not practise any degree of censorship in any sphere.

Values and ideals

Not only is it impossible for ideal political structures, processes and attitudes to be established over night; I cannot believe they have ever existed. Given Berlin's idea (1998) that every value that is

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cherished has to be held in tension with another (peace and justice, freedom and security), and given that societies are not static in their constitution, aspirations or needs; given also the fallibility of even the best motivated human beings, perfect democracy will never exist. What is possible and necessary for the maintenance of relatively peaceful and just relationships is the

aspiration towards a participatory, fair society and inclusive, accountable and transparent processes. And in spite of the cultural debate surrounding the concept of human rights, I would affirm the importance of that concept and of its use as a reference point in society; not as a means for undermining the common good or the need for delegated authority, but as a contribution to the creation of communities which *are* communities, rather than tyrannies.

Security

For any measure of genuine political freedom and participation to be possible, relative physical security needs to be in place. Murders and intimidation may be braved by some, but make participation too dangerous for most. They also make it hard to distinguish what would otherwise be acceptable political campaigning from threat and coercion. (This became clear to me recently when political parties in Kosovo/a were discussing the idea of door to door campaigning!) So, once again, the chicken presupposes the egg, and vice versa. Provision for inclusive political participation is a precondition for the 'civilising' of conflict; but the minimising of violence is needed for political processes to be possible.

External support

'Culturally sensitive' support and recognition at the international level will, as noted by Miall et al (1999, 2003), aid in the establishment of a new government and political arrangements. This will, in due course, mean 'integration into co-operative and equitable regional and global structures'. (Do these exist?) There is a place for international NGOs in supporting local efforts to (re)establish political structures and practices and to encourage the flourishing of 'civil society', but our support is no doubt based on our own values and judgements, which need to be made explicit and not imposed.

Questions:

Could there be some bottom line, moral and/or practical, for workable and/or acceptable political relationships? Who should set it and on what basis? How can such a bottom line be (re)established after violent upheaval? What principles, if any, should guide the support we give, decisions about where to give it and the manner in which we do it?

Economic and social development and inclusion

Exclusion and marginalisation

Many conflicts bear some relationship to the experience of exclusion, not only political – from the power of decision-making and governance – but also (and arguably more painfully) social and economic. It is largely at the political level that decisions are taken which promote or reduce exclusion and inclusion – however circumscribed politicians may find themselves by economic powers and pressures which are, to a degree, outside their control. If all the well paid, influential and respected work goes to one group, or if some are kept in every way on the margins of social as well as economic life – excluded from decent education or health services, or membership of influential organisations, for instance – not only will that marginalisation cause resentment and create a potential breeding ground for 'direct' violence; in itself it constitutes a form of violence – a violation of the humanity and dignity of those so excluded and diminished. Where such groups exist (and where do they not?) there is no peace worthy of the name, but the hidden conflict of oppression, enforced by the actual or threatened use of direct violence by those in power.

Poverty and wealth

War impoverishes societies, many of which will already have been poor. In any country there are rich people, and their wealth is an affront to the poor. When the gulf between rich and poor is dug along lines of identity and identification, for instance ethnic lines, the affront is all the more palpable. On the world scale, one cannot but see such a gulf, and within any society it is visible, if not so glaringly obvious. Although peace and justice may be competing goods, as argued earlier, they are also

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interdependent and indeed inextricable. In whatever context, from local to international, the rich will have to concede some of their power and wealth to the poor in order to

buy peace, whether that wealth comes in the form of land, as in Israel/ Palestine, or of the price paid for commodities, or the cancellation of 'debt', at the world level.

Without the capacity to raise taxes and provide in some way for its people, no government can survive. In post-war contexts, economic support for the development of infrastructures and the re-establishment of relatively just and inclusive economic life and public services will be essential for stability. If those living in relatively stable and affluent countries have an interest in that stability, let alone a sense of solidarity with those who need it, we will need to put our hands in our pockets.

Do no harm

Just as democracy requires both strong government and an active civil society, so social and economic development will need to take place at all levels, from central to regional and local government, and within local communities and families. The way in which support is given from above or from outside will be important (see Anderson 1996). It can accentuate divisions and envy, or encourage and promote equality and co-operation. It is, of course, not easy to get this right. 'Undue' attention to the needs of a disadvantaged group may increase resentment against the people belonging to it. For instance, although Roma peoples are often despised for their poverty, when they are financially successful they may be more than ever the object of hatred.

Although making support conditional on the interethnic management of a project may in some circumstances be unrealistic or counter-productive, the opportunity to address a common need may be an excellent stimulus for a return to some kind of 'business as usual'. (I remember hearing Judith Large talk about the resumption of interethnic trading across the line being held by peace keeping tanks in some part of the former Yugoslavia.) Community relations work (already mentioned above) can include economic and educational projects.

Not only is attention needed to the ways in which 'support' from outside impacts on interethnic or other intergroup relations; it is also vital that it should encourage rather than compete with or undermine local capacities and efforts. In the paper prepared for the CCTS seminar on Kosovo/a by Howard Clark while the war was still in progress, this was a major theme. Yet Iain Guest, in a commentary entitled 'Misplaced Charity Undermines Kosovo's Self-Reliance' (Feb. 2000), gives a damning analysis of the effect of international efforts on local initiatives and potential in Kosovo/a. If national rather than international politics are supposed to take the place of war, then it is vital that local life is not drowned or swept away but nurtured and given space to grow.

Peace as the space for human thriving

Just as security and democracy need each other, equitable and inclusive economic development needs them both. Human beings manage to keep themselves together in extraordinarily adverse circumstances, but to thrive both individually and communally (and I would argue that those two aspects of human existence are not really separable) they need a reasonably secure and hospitable space in which to do so. And peace does not exist outside human thriving.

'Say no to peace
If what they mean by peace
Is the quiet misery of hunger
The frozen stillness of fear
The silence of broken spirits
The unborn hopes of the oppressed.

Tell them that peace
Is the shouting of children at play
The babble of tongues set free
The thunder of dancing feet
And a father's voice singing.'

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Whatever the source of that poem, which I copied off the fence at Greenham Common once, it expresses the passion I feel for the idea that peace is far more than the absence of physical violence – or indeed, than a return to civil politics. The ongoing efforts of oppressed people to

uplift themselves are essential to the work of conflict transformation. It entails perpetuating conflict at some level and in some form. If we are in the business of supporting conflict transformation, we should see support for self-empowerment and advocacy as part of that remit. Given the price of conflict violently waged, and the fragility of post-war relationships, to act constructively for change in such contexts is a precarious business; but it is essential that the work of justice should go on.

Questions:

How far does peace require distributive justice? How just can justice be? Are we honest about our own moral and political agendas? How can we persuade our governments to take seriously the need for economic support for peace, and how can we ensure that support is just that – supportive of local efforts, resources and relationships – and does not displace or undermine them?

Culture and personal assumptions

No escape from cultural bias

Although the elements of this jigsaw which I have tried to put together have, for the most part, been so general as to seem incontrovertible, I am aware that what I take for granted may be particular, in fact, to my culture and sub-culture, as well as to my own idiosyncratic viewpoints and assumptions. I have tried to be aware of this and to examine what I have written, checking it for culturally biased assumptions as I went along. Our deepest assumptions are, however, necessarily invisible to us – beyond identification. Although I am a universalist in believing that some aspects of human experience and aspirations may be shared, I am aware that the lenses through which we see the world, and the minds with which we interpret it, are culturally formed and will colour and shape the way we perceive and think about anything. (See, for instance, Salem 1993.) However, having failed so far to name an issue which is at least as big as any other and arguably the biggest there is, I will name it now: the place of more than half the world's population in relation to the less than half of the rest – the place, rights and potential of women.

Culture and gender

Whatever anyone may say about culture, I will state here that there can be no peace while women are treated as chattels, beaten for 'disobedience', traded and abused, excluded against their will from life outside the home, denied legal and economic rights, or generally treated as less than human. The conflict over the relative rights of men and women has never been surfaced in such a concerted way as to be recognised in the way that 'interethnic' or international conflicts have. Perhaps it is too vast and internally varied a conflict for that to be possible. Nor does it seem to me desirable that it should take a similar shape. At the same time, in many societies it represents a latent conflict waiting to happen, while in others it is in the process of slow and uneasy transformation. Not only do women have the right to express their full humanity; societies need the skills, insights and visions of women as well as men. They do not need the hideous images of male violence which characterise the statuary and iconography of so many nations, nor the culture of violence which those images represent.

Conflict prevention not a goal

To return to the title of this paper, getting away from violence means getting into politics, rather than ending conflict. 'Conflict prevention' is not something to aspire to; nor is any situation ever 'post conflict'. Peace is a process which embraces justice and in which conflict is the means of constructive change, rather than the occasion for more cruelty and destruction. If this could be clarified, the 'culture question' so often uneasily referred to in the field of 'conflict resolution' might begin to take care of itself. For those of us included in the benefits and associated with the tyrannies of 'the West', to take that seriously would mean to prepare ourselves for a very bumpy ride for a long time to come.

Questions:

How can we marry 'emancipatory projects' with cultural awareness and humility (or at least sensitivity)? How much conflict is desirable? How can the broad and long term issues of gender and global justice get incorporated (or not) into the way we address specific crises?

Conclusions

Conflict transformation is an ongoing process of global proportions. Making the transition from violence to politics, in any situation, may be an urgent need but is unlikely to be other than an uphill struggle when the world context is so inimical. It presupposes all kinds of things that are unlikely ever to be in place to any adequate degree. When I think of the realities of post-war Kosovo/a or Sierra Leone, or the alternating rounds of fighting and uneasy truce in Angola or Sri Lanka, to talk of so many needs for a lasting transition seems not only realistic but a recipe for despair. At the same time, there are relative success stories to point to; places where mass violence has ended and there is at least the opportunity for social and economic life to be developed; where a political climate less hostile to the needs and rights of ordinary people has been established; where even the needs of the battered environment have begun to be thought of. It is part of the conundrum that each step has to be taken before the necessary conditions are in place. The biggest challenge to the theories of conflict transformation is to think how they can be translated into practice in situations where they have not been applied. 'I wouldn't have started from here' is a reasonable thing to say, but it is no answer.

If, as I have suggested, it is impossible for many of the things which are needful for a transition to civil politics to be fully possible, and if those needful things are all interdependent and need to be in place at once, we have to accept that the path from violence to politics is always likely to be precarious and often discouraging. It will never be possible to step forward with confidence, at any level. Nothing will be able to be fully under control, but will be susceptible to unpredictable events, conditions and circumstances. So how can we approach what needs to be done? The intricacies of the jigsaw which has to be put together make the task daunting enough, but in addition the pieces and the overall picture will be constantly changing. I will therefore change metaphors and suggest that the task is rather to help keep a river flowing in the right direction. It doesn't matter which bucket of water we contribute, or which blockage we try to remove. All contributions will be needed. Our responses will be governed partly by our knowledge of the river, and the shape and size of our bucket and shovel; but we will be guided by where our local friends, who know the river best, want to work with the resources at their disposal, and what support role they would assign to us. We will try not to get in each other's way, or theirs, and we will keep looking up and around, to see how things are going and whether we are helping or working in the wrong place. We will also keep an eye on the weather, knowing there may be times to take cover and try again later.

Some general questions for discussion

How can we balance pragmatism and principle, and can they be separated? Is it possible or desirable to generalise about what is and is not negotiable?

What is the relationship between peace and justice?

What are the values we are using to decide these issues? Whose are they: our own, ones that are acceptable to those involved, or are they based on some 'universal standard', if that exists/ could be agreed?

Is it possible to give work at the community level additional political leverage?

How can we hold together the value and political importance of self-determination with the facts of global power relations and the notion of humanitarian responsibilities which transcend national boundaries?

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Can we do anything to change the global context (cultural, political, economic) within which all these things happen? If so, what?

How can we make sensible decisions about where to put our efforts as international NGOs, and how can we evaluate them?

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Addenda:

After presenting this paper on June 15th, I realised that I had made no reference to the need to persuade soldiers to hand in their weapons and to reintegrate them into civilian life. This omission will doubtless be rectified in our next seminar, on ‘Demilitarising Minds and Societies.’

Another important omission which I have noticed – and did not intend – was some reference to the need for ecological repair when harm has been inflicted, for instance, when chemical factories have been bombed, landmines laid, or depleted uranium used to reinforce warheads.

Diana Francis. May 2000

Seminar Report: Conflict transformation – from violence to politics

An account of the seminar, based on the record made by Peter Jarman and the contributions of other participants

Eighteen people attended this seminar, which was organised by the Committee for Conflict Transformation Support (CCTS) and held at the Britannia Conference Centre, London, on June 15th 2000. (Participants are listed at the end of this account).

The seminar laid the ground for a series of further CCTS seminars on *Supporting Post-Conflict Peacebuilding*. Its purpose was to review the many elements of what is needed to achieve constructive processes and outcomes in post-conflict situations, and to discuss some of the dilemmas. Inevitably, it was concerned with both practical and moral issues, and the tension which often exists between them: questions surrounding deeply held social and political values about justice, rights and responsibilities, and what constitutes a good society.

Diana Francis opened the seminar with a substantial review of her paper (printed above). She commented that she had found it difficult and, at times, depressing to write since the issues were so complex, and it had involved trying to untangle how it was possible to act in a constructive and principled way in situations which were by nature far from ideal. At times she had found herself wondering whether anything in the way of conflict transformation could be made to work. Yet societies do recover in time, even after terrible wars, and positive action in support of recovery was essential.

Plenary discussion

(...not necessarily representing the consensus of the gathering)

The peacebuilding process itself includes an element of force, as police and security forces,

suitably armed and equipped, are necessary for the establishment of the rule of law. A

blanket condemnation of all violence and weapons ignores this reality.

Any intervention, whether military or civilian, needs to have an exit strategy. In practice, however, intervention often creates problems and dependencies that complicate the process of withdrawal and may delay it indefinitely. Western powers, for example, are still trying to extricate themselves from the Gulf following the intervention of 1991. The problem is likely to be even greater in Kosovo/a and Sierra Leone.

NGOs, too, have to try to avoid raising unrealistic expectations of what they can contribute.

Can a ceasefire come too soon by rescuing from defeat a party that really needs to be defeated – the rebel forces in Sierra Leone for example? The dilemma here is that the fighting needs to end for the process of re-establishing normal politics to begin. But if a ceasefire consolidates the position of a party determined to block that process, the problem might remain intractable.

In order to bring about a ceasefire, peacebuilders may have to deal with *de facto* power holders who have been responsible for aggression and war crimes, thereby consolidating their advantage over victim communities and affronting the latter's basic need for justice. This can severely compromise the moral authority of the external intervenors.

The credibility of the claim of outside states to be intervening on humanitarian grounds is

compromised when they fail to take any action in parallel situations out of considerations of advantage or realpolitik. In Kosovo/a, the intervening states calculated they could probably emerge unscathed from the action.

However, those same powers gingerly left Russia alone in a morally equivalent situation (in terms of human rights violations and the death and injury of civilians). Prudential considerations, such as the risk of sparking a wider war – perhaps even a world war – are a legitimate element in the moral debate. But that does not lessen the hypocrisy of the states concerned failing even to take a serious diplomatic stand against Russian policies in Chechnya.

After the initial discussion, participants divided into four groups to consider particular sections of the discussion paper. They worked in the same groups before and after lunch, reporting back in the final session. The outcomes of their discussions are summarised below, under the paper's section headings, on the basis of Peter Jarman's record and individual reports submitted by other participants.

Necessary conditions for the resumption of civil politics

from Alan Pleydell:

In her presentation, Diana recognised that none of the pre-conditions for true civil politics could be privileged above the others, though in terms of sequence some, such as a ceasefire that would hold, might necessarily require prior attention before anything else could begin to fall into place. But however impossible it might prove to be in fact and actual opportunity in particular cases, the ideal was to try to proceed on all fronts at once and at least try to keep all the necessary ingredients of the transition to politics actively in mind. Then, as the opportunity arose within the unique unfolding profile of each particular situation, they could be all be introduced and worked on.

Diana's presentation set the tone for a difficult but stimulating and rewarding discussion within our small group. We looked in particular at the problems of firstly achieving ceasefires, then getting them to stick and then advancing from stalemate to some sort of equitable order. One of the central points we tried to wrestle with was the apparent necessity of including de facto power holders who had committed the vilest atrocities within the initial dispensation of a

ceasefire, simply in order to achieve stasis and a breathing space – to stop the killing. This carried the danger, however,

of seriously consolidating the power of butchers, whilst leaving the victims or their remaining families dispossessed and ruined, and excluded – sometimes perpetually – from even the prospect of recognition or minimal restitution. Furthermore, it was likely to lead to ever more rounds of fighting if the signatories were not even mildly serious. From this point of view it might in some cases (such as Sierra Leone or Liberia) be better to choose not to intervene to force a ceasefire until such parties were defeated militarily (always assuming that was the way the tide was running!).

Elevating 'civil order' over the arrest and trial of war criminals, even where it might be prudentially required in the short term, could have disastrous consequences for the claimed 'authority', however broadly based, of an external intervention. This could, however, be mitigated in part by proceeding to arrest and try offenders after a lapse to allow minimal civil order to become established. Similarly, the authority of external intervention could also be compromised by purporting to employ human rights criteria to justify it, as in the 1999 NATO intervention in Yugoslavia/ Kosovo/a. The credibility of this was undermined by the inconsistency of not intervening, or even of protesting more than minimally in all like cases (for instance in Chechnya). Nevertheless, we acknowledged that there might be a moral reality and necessity in such prudential calculations, since unacceptable risk for the world at large is an entirely proper consideration in a decision not to intervene, however tragic.

The group felt that some of these anomalies could be lessened by paying more attention to the social and community chapters/clauses of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights – rather than the bias towards individual rights which tends to be favoured by the western powers who mostly claimed the authority (under UN auspices) to intervene.

This represents only two of the strands of a rich and interwoven conversation which was enlivened and highlighted by detailed examples

of situations where these conundrums present themselves, particularly for NGOs who are often operating within the context of a scenario set by military intervention. Examples were taken from West Africa, Sri Lanka, the former Soviet Union and the Balkans.

Peter Jarman's record indicates some of the complexities raised by these examples, and the hard realities that have to be faced:

It was recognised that whilst there is a moral duty to establish a ceasefire as early as possible, to do so may not provide optimum conditions for creating a civil society. From this perspective, the ceasefire might come too early, as in Sierra Leone, or too late, as in Bosnia. Including, as parties to a peace treaty, groups like the rebels in Sierra Leone, who have cut off the limbs of adults and children, may simply multiply the difficulties of establishing a civil society – especially if such parties have no intention to abide by the ceasefire. The price paid for such a ceasefire may preclude effective intervention by NGOs to quicken moves towards democracy and a civil society. Some ceasefires last only a few days, as happened many times in Liberia. A ceasefire is, in any case, merely a transitional step on the way to re-establishing a civil society.

State actors may change their tactics following a visit by one of their leaders, as happened when the British Foreign Secretary visited Sierra Leone and realised that Liberia had to be dissuaded from providing weapons to the IUF rebels. Outside states may contribute the instability of a situation by supplying weapons to both sides in an effort to maintain a balanced tension.

There was a time before war broke out between the government and the rebels in Sierra Leone when the backers of both sides were willing to engage in dialogue and to eschew violence. However, there was then an almost total lack of the trust required for meaningful dialogue. Violence is symptomatic of an absence of trust and the task of peace-builders after a ceasefire is to bring people together in trust-building relationships.

Peacekeepers may be required for an indefinite period in the aftermath of a violent conflict, and this too raises problems. One of the sides, for example, such as the rebels in Sierra Leone, may calculate that the intervening states will not be prepared to make such a commitment and may bide their time until the peacekeepers are withdrawn and then renew their attacks. What decides the time when peacekeepers are pulled

out? Exhaustion of people? Exhaustion of money? Attrition?

In Sri Lanka, the settlement of the protracted conflict might well come about through de-escalating the violence rather than through a ceasefire.

Establishing participatory politics

from Guus Meijer:

The group began by listing the principal reasons why each member chose this topic for further small group work and then explored the emerging themes in a free-floating discussion. The main points were:

- What are the specific elements in post-settlement situations, which are needed in order to prevent a return to violence, in terms of structures of governance and decision-making, and features of political culture that will take a long time to change?
- Why is there always a rush to democracy, in the narrow sense of multi-party elections? Transition, for example in parts of the former Soviet Union, is a violent experience for most people. Because its language tends to be English and its origins Western, the very concepts and processes of peace-building itself contain elements of violence or force when applied to quite different cultures. Introducing competitive politics in transitional societies, wrecked and polarised by war, brings further factionalisation, which permeates everything.
- Both pre- and post-conflict, structures are not enough – they have to be filled with people, who participate on the basis of their ability to understand and discuss the issues, including the key ones of communication, empowerment and ownership.
- How can civil society involvement in post-settlement peacebuilding take place in a manner that does not undermine political processes and institutions, but progressively strengthens them? What type of support can

external agencies provide for such
'constructive engagement' with politics by
civil society actors?

- What can be the roles of inside and outside agencies in promoting a shift from personalised power, based on patronage, towards the rule of law? To what extent is

outside force justified to sort out a situation in cases where there is no prospect for fundamental change from inside? What forms of partnership should be envisaged: on the basis of shared values, or more pragmatically, on agreed specific and limited goals? The agenda should always be determined by local partners, or at least developed in consultation with them.

- In certain situations, like Palestine, formal political structures exist mainly on paper. They are not accountable or democratic and it is frequently civil society and NGOs that embody the values of democracy, transparency, accountability and participation. People in NGOs tend to be younger, better educated, and counter-elite: they pose a threat to old-style political culture and structures.
- Old forms of patronage are being eroded (through market integration or globalisation), but new, global forms have emerged – mafias, warlords – and they are much more violent.

The group identified features of post-settlement societies that need to be promoted in order for non-violent, participatory politics to be established:

- (i) The Rule of Law – which implies an independent judiciary and a police force and military that are accountable to the civilian authorities. Pre-conflict structures and traditions that could support inclusion, participation and the rule of law are important – as is making space for active non-state organisations.
- (ii) Trustworthiness and confidence that decisions and policies can be influenced, and leaderships changed, at all levels of government and administration without recourse to violence.
- (iii) Education, both formal and informal, and an independent media. The awareness of a more peaceful (recent) past can play a positive role, though both formal and informal education tends to invoke violent and heroic episodes.
- (iv) Security, both physical and economic. A sense of physical security or survival for

individuals and groups is crucial. Citizens should feel confident that they will not be assaulted or killed in going about their everyday business. This essentially

depends on the behaviour and attitudes of the police and the military. However, those who have to provide this security in post-settlement societies are often the same people who have participated in the fighting and in some cases perpetrated the grossest atrocities. In addition to physical security, economic security (or perhaps better 'existential security') was emphasised: individuals and groups need a sense of certainty for the future, of predictability, confidence and hope. Uncertainty and fear are strong forces behind ethnic or sectarian mobilisation by political entrepreneurs; these forces exacerbate conflict and violence. Such fears need to be checked in order to construct a viable participatory and inclusive politics based on human rights and respect for minorities.

- (v) Civil society. It was not clear whether this should be an area of its own or rather one underlying and permeating the others. Civil society action and mobilisation should not be construed as antagonistic to 'politics' but rather as a necessary and strengthening force for the blossoming of democratic institutions and the rule of law.

There was insufficient time for the group to identify what external actors, such as the organisations represented in the seminar, could and should do in bringing about some of the necessary changes in appropriate problem areas, not in the sense of a universal prescription, but specifically targeted on particular countries and situations.

Economic and social development and inclusion

compiled by Marigold Bentley with the help of notes from Peter Jarman:

The group recognised the huge scope of this topic. In an initial overview, the point was discussed that there are many levels to economic development and that they include global, national and local economies. These levels are inter-related and impact on one another.

Experience in the group indicated that resource wars tend on the face of it to be zero sum games, with little room for compromise or negotiation. Resources are a key to economic growth of any kind and thus

resource wars are particularly complicated to deal with. In our experience, however, few wars are solely about resources, as many other elements become part of an escalating conflict. However, if access to resources is the fundamental requirement of survival, and such access is prevented, then violence is likely to be used as a tool to regain access.

Economic growth – a term which is commonly used but rarely explored, and is based on the assumption that it is a ‘good thing’ – does involve the issue of distribution. If investment is to promote peaceful change rather than oppressive regimes, unjust economic structures have to be challenged to ensure the ‘proper application’ of resources. Again, the term ‘proper application’ is politically loaded and can mean different things to different people. As our emphasis was on creating a stable society in which the mass of the people flourish rather than the few, we regarded distribution as a key issue. Another was the need for special attention to be paid to women’s economic development as they play a key economic role and use funds for credit schemes more efficiently and productively than men. Governance and the use of state power require fiscal policies that include taxation to pay for the infrastructure to meet the needs of citizens. Tax raising powers require monitoring and stability of income.

Local leadership has an impact on the social development of any community. We have observed patterns of international investment which either exploit or ignore local human resources and expectations. The question is whether the West, in promoting development, is simply trying to further its own agenda rather than listening to and acting on the needs of people.

How do we, as agencies or as activists, honestly respond to people’s needs when they contradict what we think may be good for them? For our group, broad-based development at local levels was seen as a constructive way forward. This would include education, the establishment and practice of legal norms, the training of the police and the inclusion of minorities and the disadvantaged in social and political programmes. The group discussed briefly the fact that trade transcends ethnic boundaries and could be seen as a model for encouraging people to focus on their common needs rather than on their differences.

We looked at what economically developed nations are doing, particularly EU development aid to micro-credit schemes, and noted the growth of interest in ethical trading and fair trade co-operatives. These can provide models for future sustainable patterns of economic growth and social development.

Culture and personal assumptions

The following points, which emerged from this group’s discussions, are based on Peter Jarman’s notes, expanded by Diana Francis as one of the group members:

Awareness of cultural assumptions is difficult to achieve, especially for those who come from dominant cultures. The difficulties associated with cultural differences are exacerbated by the power asymmetries between ‘the West and the rest’. For Western professionals working outside their own culture, it is essential to be aware of the way they are likely to be perceived, initially at least, in post-colonial settings, and to respect the insights of other cultures and the dignity of those formed by them. They will also have to accept the limitations which history has imposed on them, the prejudices that it has engendered, and the effects of neo-colonial behaviour by their governments. It is proper to assume that all cultures are equal, until proved otherwise, and that people from all cultures are in any case equally to be respected. And it is important to cultivate awareness of one’s own cultural assumptions and be ready to challenge them. Where possible in post-violence situations, justice processes should be dealt with by the country in question, though recourse may have to be made to the authority of an International Court where the local justice system is dysfunctional. There may be arguments for external intervention and an imposed settlement on the way to local conflict transformation and self-determination.

Those who intervene in post-violent situations take to them their own preconceptions and judgements, however much they seek to stand beside those with whom they work. Those working at NGO level, however, are not in so much danger of imposing their own agendas as are intervening states.

Cultural sensitivities and differences notwithstanding, it is necessary to clarify the values on which contributions to peacebuilding are to be based. The fact that ways of doing things are traditional does not necessarily make them good. The West has many destructive traditions of its own.

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, for example, has little to say about the rights of communities. What it says about the rights of individuals, such as the rights to freedom from torture or imprisonment without a fair trial, was nonetheless valid for this group. Members felt that, cultural differences notwithstanding, they were prepared to nail their colours to the human rights mast, and agreed that it was important to be open about the values informing any intervention.

In the afternoon, this group discussed some of the needs for peacebuilding after violence, and began with this same point: respect for basic human rights is vital to the healing process after violence and provides a necessary bottom line. It is the basis for an end to killing and to all forms of degrading treatment of persons.

Respect is needed too for the natural environment, often terribly degraded by war. The war-free, economically developed countries, responsible for much of the damage through bombing, who are the major consumers and polluters, are guilty of double standards when they make high demands for the rest of the world in relation to the environment.

Repairing the psychological and social fabric

None of the four groups took this topic for its initial focus, but at least two of them discussed it briefly in the afternoon and included some thoughts about it in their reports.

The group above noted that rituals of purification could offer a non-divisive way for wrongs to be acknowledged and processed, both individually and communally.

Remembering those who have suffered and died is necessary and is not in contradiction to forgiveness.

Here are some other points taken from Peter Jarman's record of the discussion in his own group (the one which discussed the conditions necessary for peacebuilding):

In situations like those created by the second Russian-Chechen war, there is severe trauma amongst thousands of children and adults. Every victim of violence is in need of counselling, but to attend to each victim in a person-centred way is well beyond available counsellors with appropriate training and language facilities. Is there a tradition of collective trauma counselling in some cultures, we wondered? In post-communist countries there is already trauma. Citizens are having to assume responsibility for decisions affecting their livelihoods, rather than leaving that to the Party, and of knowing who they are – establishing their personal and collective identities. This problem is compounded in a violent situation in which their livelihood is destroyed.

After interethnic violence, like that in the Balkans and Nagorno Karabakh, ethnic groups often become further alienated from each other by ceasefire lines and by the hostile stereotyping of one group by the other, fuelled by the media. To restore a multi-ethnic civil society, 'normal' constructive communication needs to be re-established. Outside NGOs can be instrumental in this, by travelling across the ceasefire lines, helping to rebuild positive communication and eventually helping groups of different ethnicity to meet together by offering an outside, monitoring or facilitating presence.

This nurturing of contacts can be embarrassing to governments, for to some extent it undermines their authority, that may require them to remain hostile to any kind of rapprochement. NGOs engaged in this task need to exercise discretion and diplomacy to maintain trustworthy contacts between peoples and governments.

Often women and young people accompanied by outside NGOs are the first to be prepared to take

the step of crossing the ceasefire lines. The adult males who participated in the fighting are less likely to be involved initially, though in some situations, for instance in Northern Ireland, ex-fighters/ terrorists/ bombers have taken initiatives to reduce further potential violence.

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Looking forward

The discussions that have begun in this first seminar will doubtless continue in the other seminars in the series, under the titles:

- ‘Demilitarising Minds and Societies’
- ‘The Interplay of Domestic, Regional and International Forces in Post-War Peacebuilding’ and
- ‘The Role of NGOs, Local and International, in Post-War Peacebuilding’.

The first of these will take place in late November or early December.

We will keep our readers posted, but please feel free to contact CCTS at the new address given on this page.

Change of secretariat

Please note that the secretariat has moved, after several years of faithful service by Jane Becker at IFOR, from the Netherlands to Conciliation Resources in London.

We thank our IFOR colleagues for all they have contributed to our work.

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