

*Dear Readers*

*Although this latest edition of our newsletter is quite slim, we felt it important to maintain something of our new found regularity of publication. Our next newsletter, in the Autumn, will be based on our forthcoming seminar: **'Dealing with the Past: Trauma Healing, Truth and Justice'**, which we be held on **October 17<sup>th</sup>**. (You will receive an invitation and form in early September.)*

*We would also like to bring you up to date with some changes in the committee: Guus Meijer, our treasurer for many years, who has in that capacity and in many small but time-consuming ways given a great deal to the life and work of the committee almost since its inception, has moved from London back to The Hague and will no longer be so actively involved. We will miss him greatly and look forward to his occasional presence at committee meetings and seminars. Although he will no longer be a Co-Director of Conciliation Resources, he will continue working for them as a Programme Associate in Angola and other parts of Southern Africa. His management functions will pass to Kushma Ram. Our new contacts at CR will be Juliet Williams and Eugenia Zorbas. Paul Clifford has taken on the role of CCTS treasurer – for which we are very grateful.*

*This summer edition of our newsletter contains an article by Paul and two book reviews, written by Andrew Rigby and Carol Rank. Paul's subject is not (as is usual) an account of practice in our field, or even an analysis of conflict in a particular region, but a discussion of the potential invasion of Iraq, and his article is preceded by a short introduction by Diana Francis.*

## **International Policy and the CCTS**

Why did we think that the 'War on Terror' and proposed war on Iraq was an appropriate topic for us, a group of practitioners working to support conflict transformation in regions suffering from widespread political violence?

Since the tragic events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, at each of our CCTS meetings we have discussed our misery and frustration at the responses it has evoked, particularly in the US and the UK: responses which in turn have had major repercussions in other parts of the world. We have debated repeatedly what responses we in turn might make and asked ourselves whether we would in fact see eye to eye with each other in our analysis and in the things we would want to advocate. We have questioned also whether it is in line with our agreed purposes as a committee to undertake such advocacy collectively. Our style is more reflective than normative. We have agreed that we would like to sit down and reflect in an open process with policy makers: one in which self examination and challenge could be genuine and mutual, but have wondered whether any policy makers would want to undergo such a process with us. In the end we have been limited by our own time and energy and not, so far, moved beyond our own personal efforts as individual members.

Why are we, as a group, so exercised by the 'War on Terror'?

First of all, I think it can be safely said that we do the work we do because of the values we hold and the transformations we would like to see. We work in support of people trying to address conflict constructively, in ways that will increase justice, reduce violence and build the foundations for peaceful relationships. I think it is reasonable to assume that we do so because their goals are consonant with ours.

If we want to see such approaches taking root in other societies, it would seem highly contradictory – not to say arrogant and dishonest – not to want them to take root in our own. And if we uphold the responsibility and capacity of citizens to act for change where they live we would, I believe, lack integrity if we took no such responsibility upon ourselves. The policies of Western governments – those for which most of our members share some responsibility – have typically been ones reliant above all on military intervention and, most recently, on unilateral assaults on chosen targets – ones involving a great number of civilian deaths. This is ironic, since much of our work in support of nonviolent approaches to conflict is funded by the very same governments. It is hard to escape the conclusion that there is one rule for the rich and powerful and another for the rest.

Personally, I find it embarrassing enough as a middle class British woman to work as a 'consultant' in other people's countries, without the added shame of Britain's current role as backer of US military attacks. Wherever I go I am asked why our Prime Minister acts as he does. Given the UK's track record, I am not sure why, but my colleagues abroad seem genuinely shocked.

My personal feelings are not the point here. What matters is that our association in our work, through Western funding, with the actions of 'the West' (and I realise that the rest of Europe is not in the same position as the US and the UK), is in danger of bringing the approaches we espouse into disrepute.

More importantly still, the punitive and bullying actions being taken by giant military powers and the deals they are doing to 'bring on board' countries which might otherwise object are giving a moral and political fig leaf to repressive governments wanting to respond with brute force to their own insurgents. In Indonesia, Burma, Nepal, China, Chechnya, Israel/Palestine – the list could be greatly extended – the notion of a 'War on Terror' is being used to justify the rejection of dialogue in favour of new rounds of repression. This has a direct impact on our work and the contexts in which our partner organisations are struggling to make a constructive contribution. (It would be good to collect well-documented accounts of this impact. Please send them to us.)

Moreover, we are in danger of becoming sucked into the 'reconstruction' end of a cycle of Western military 'interventions' and their aftermath. While I am still working in Kosovo/a, in the wake of the NATO war there, many other 'internationals' have already moved on to Afghanistan. It has been evident that the effects of an overwhelming international presence have been to submerge local capacities, undermine local service provision and distort the (already weak) local economy and what was left of Kosovar society, at the same time establishing a huge sex trade which flourished in response to its 'needs'. I find that acutely depressing and foresee the repetition of the same mistakes in Afghanistan. They are not separate in their invasiveness from but a continuation of the original policy and impact of military assault.

I believe in the work I do because I believe in the people I work with. They act with courage in the face of huge odds and do so with integrity and vision, believing that nonviolent ways forward are possible. I share their aspirations and I want my country to become part of the solution – not remain as a very real and powerful part of the problem. Paul's article argues why a war

on Iraq would be a horrible example of the latter.

*Diana Francis*

## The Rule of Law or the Rule of Might?

*This article, reacting to the threat by the US and the UK to declare war on Iraq, has been written by Paul Clifford*

The drums of war are beating loudly. Public opinion in the US and the UK is being prepared for war though official denials of any decision being taken are still being uttered.

Preparations are being made by the US Government: by building a suitable base in Oman (given Saudi Arabia will not permit the US to attack Iraq from its territory), by increasing their stock of weapons and missiles and by stockpiling oil reserves in case the war leads to a drop in oil supplies.

The US and UK governments believe that they have sufficient authority to attack Iraq without the need to return to the United Nations to discuss the matter further. Many governments, many political parties, many organisations (both religious and secular) and countless individuals are fervently opposed to a war against Iraq, believing that there is neither legal nor moral justification for it.

The justification for the war in the view of the US and UK governments is that Iraq is in breach of UN resolutions, that it has chemical and biological weapons of mass destruction, which its government could use or supply to others. Iraq is also believed to be developing a nuclear weapons capability. It would thus be a pre-emptive war, to bring about 'regime change' in Iraq, i.e. to get rid of Saddam Hussein.

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### Would the war be legal?

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Let us first examine the legality of such a war. There is little doubt that Iraq is, indeed, in breach of UN Security Council resolutions. Resolution 687 (1991) requires Iraq to permit UN weapons inspectors to verify the dismantling of its weapons of mass destruction. The penalty for non-compliance, stated in the resolution, is the imposition of sanctions – there is no reference to military action. Resolution 678 (1990) had previously authorised states to use "all necessary means" against Iraq, but this was solely in relation to reversing Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Once the invasion had been reversed in 1991, the authority to use military action against Iraq lapsed. There is therefore no current UN resolution permitting the use of force against Iraq.

The other attempt to legally justify a war against Iraq relates to Article 51 of the United Nations charter, which permits member states to take action in self-defence

against a threat posed against them. To attempt to justify the war on these grounds, George W. Bush has stated that "Iraq poses a continuing, unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security of the United States of America". To date, he has put no information in the public arena that justifies this assertion.

Those that oppose the war claim that there is no legal justification for it. As the Bishop of Oxford stated "by threatening to attack a sovereign state without a specific UN mandate, without demonstrating just cause and without exhausting all chances of a peaceful resolution, the governments of the USA and the UK make a mockery of international law."

Whether or not there is a current UN resolution allowing or justifying a military attack against Iraq under Article 51 could, of course, be clarified, by seeking a clear UN mandate for such an attack. For reasons I will examine later, this seems highly unlikely to happen.

What then of the other arguments for and against the war? The US government and others who support the war provide an impressive list of justifications for launching a war against Saddam Hussein:

- He has chemical weapons, which he has used against his own people.
- He has biological weapons, which he is prepared to use.
- He is developing nuclear weapons and the capability of delivering them.
- In the Gulf War, he attacked Saudi Arabia and Israel as well as Kuwait, and will do so again unless stopped.
- He wants to destroy Israel.
- He wants to control the Saudi and Kuwaiti oilfields.
- It will be easier to sort out the Israel/Palestine situation once he is removed from office.
- He oppresses his own people and threatens others. Though it is difficult for them to say it publicly, the Iraqi people and their Arab neighbours will rejoice at his overthrow.
- He makes a mockery of the UN's role 'to maintain international peace and security.'
- The United Nations Security Council is not an adequate defence against evil.
- It is acceptable to have a more benign military dictator take over from him, at least in the short term.
- Failure to attack is a worse option than to attack.

Few would argue with the notion that Saddam Hussein is a dictator who oppresses his own people and who has used chemical weapons against them, and who has attacked Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Israel. But the invasion of Kuwait was dealt with at the time; and a policy of containment, threats, sanctions, and economic, political and diplomatic pressure has been in place ever since. In fact, many people argue that the sanctions are no longer justified and have

had the effect of killing vast numbers of Iraqi children. Also, reports suggest that the effect of these policies has been highly punitive on the Iraqi people as a whole and that Iraq has been reduced to the point where it is not a threat to anyone. Thus any further military action against Iraq now would be gratuitous as well as illegal.

It is true that the weapons inspectors have not been able to carry out their role of verification for many years now. If it were possible to negotiate their return, in accordance with resolution 687, would this then be sufficient to call off the impending war? Not according to the US administration, which has stated that the return of weapons inspectors is not enough – what they require is 'regime change'.

It would thus seem that, for the US government, the possession of, and possible use of, weapons of mass destruction is not the core issue. What they want is the removal of Saddam Hussein and nothing else will do.

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### **The argument against war**

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Those who argue against the war declare that there is no evidence that Saddam Hussein has the capability of using chemical and biological weapons to attack others, and that, even if he did have that capability he would not use it, because the consequent attack upon Iraq would destroy both himself and much of the country. If nothing else, he wants to remain in power in Iraq and would not commence an attack that would assuredly lead to retribution and his own downfall.

If the weapons inspectors could continue with their work, it would at least produce some verifiable evidence of whether Iraq has once again built up stocks of chemical and biological weapons and whether it is building a nuclear weapons capacity. The dismissal of this as irrelevant by the US administration is hardly likely to encourage the Iraqis to co-operate.

Why then is the current US administration, with the backing of its UK ally, so unwilling

to seek a clear UN mandate for an attack on Iraq? And why is it so unwilling to trust in the UN weapons inspection mechanism to determine whether Iraq has developed and has the means of delivering weapons of mass destruction?

If we examine the record of the current US administration since it came to power, we see, *inter alia*, that it has:

- continued to develop biological weapons of its own, in contravention of the biological weapons convention
- refused to grant chemical weapons inspectors full access to its laboratories while demanding that other countries, including Iraq, submit to full inspection
- withdrawn from the Anti Ballistic Missile treaty
- undermined the setting up of the International Criminal Court
- refused to sign the climate change protocol
- given the green light to the CIA to assassinate Saddam Hussein
- threatened war on Iraq without seeking a UN mandate

It also appears to be ready to violate the nuclear test ban treaty.

These are the actions of an administration that appears to have little commitment to, or trust in, the United Nations. It would rather rely on its own military and economic might to further its own interests. Taking the issue of a war against Iraq to the UN clearly runs the risk of it not being approved. Rather than take this risk, the US administration, together with its UK ally, would rather reserve the power to act unilaterally.

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### **The authority of the UN**

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Pax Christi stated recently “it is deplorable that the world’s most powerful nations continue to regard war and the threat of war as an acceptable instrument of foreign policy, in violation of the ethos of both the UN and Christian moral teaching... The

way to peace does not lie through war but through the transformation of structures of injustice and of the politics of exclusion and that is the cause to which the west should be devoting its technological, diplomatic and economic resources.”

If the authority of the United Nations and the upholding of international law is to have any meaning in the future, then at the very least, I would suggest that the following needs to happen:

- Negotiations should continue to ensure the return of UN weapons inspectors to Iraq in accordance with resolution 687.
- Diplomatic and political efforts should continue to be made to attempt to resolve issues of conflict between Iraq, the USA and the UK governments.

War against Iraq should certainly not be contemplated by the US and the UK unless there is approval from the US Congress and the UK Parliament, and there is a UN mandate specifically sanctioning an attack on Iraq. Under present circumstances, I find it hard to imagine that such a mandate could possibly be given, which means that every effort should be put into finding political and diplomatic solutions to this situation.

If the US administration, with or without the backing of its UK ally, initiates a war against Iraq, the consequences could be catastrophic not only for the Iraqi people, but also throughout the Middle East, as the fallout from the war is impossible to predict. If the conflicts in the Middle East worsen, this has implications for all of us. There is also concern that after Iraq, others could be attacked. Iran is certainly a prime candidate as it fulfils many of the criteria that the US administration is using to justify an attack on Iraq.

This issue is not just about Iraq. It is about whether the militarily and economically powerful nations choose to use that power over others to get their own way or whether nations use the structures of the United Nations and international law to try and resolve disputes and conflicts between them.

## Book reviews

We have reviews of two new books in this Newsletter:

**Mohammed Abu-Nimer**, ed., *Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence: Theory and Practice*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001

**Diana Francis**, *People, Peace and Power: Conflict Transformation in Action*, London: Pluto Press, 2002.

### Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence: Theory and Practice

*This review has been written by Andrew Rigby, Professor of Peace Studies and Director of the Centre for the Study of Forgiveness and Reconciliation at Coventry University, UK*

This collection of essays edited by Mohammed Abu Nimer is an excellent contribution to the existing body of work addressing the problems of creating a sustainable peace in societies emerging out of violent conflict. It consists of 16 chapters, each based on papers delivered at a conference held in February 1999 under the title *Promoting justice and peace through reconciliation and coexistence alternatives*. As such the book has the strengths and weaknesses of such collections – a rich range of contributions coming from an impressive selection of authors, but an unevenness of quality and a degree of repetition that would not be found in a single-authored text.

The book is divided into two parts. The first eight contributions are grouped under the heading of *Theoretical frameworks for reconciliation in peace-building*, with the other eight drawing on case study material to illustrate a range of approaches to promoting justice, coexistence and reconciliation in different situations.

The first part contains a typical contribution by Johan Galtung in which he develops a taxonomy of twelve different approaches to reconciliation. Reconciliation is defined in typical Galtung-ian fashion as ‘closure + healing’, and his argument is that it can only be approached by an appropriate combination of the different methodologies. The trouble I found with his approach (apart from a serious question mark around the notion of ‘closure’) was that by the time I had got to the twelfth type I had forgotten what the first three had been!

Rather more accessible is the excellent overview by Louis Kreisberg of the different forms (and degrees) of coexistence

according to types of inter-communal interaction and integration. The value of this contribution lies in the way the author forces us to question the easy manner in which many of us use the term ‘reconciliation’, without pausing to consider that reconciliation, like other human processes, needs to be viewed along a continuum of different degrees and types.

By contrast with the rather schematic treatment of Galtung and Kreisberg, Marc Gopin presents a sensitive and informed analysis of the significance of forgiveness in the three Abrahamic faiths. At a time when the US government’s list of ‘rogue states’ is composed primarily of Islamic countries, it is perhaps worth noting that whilst in Islam it is expected that people have the right to repay evil for evil, those who can forgive – even when justifiably angry – will receive the highest reward, and the Qur’an suggests that people deal with their differences by means of consultation. It is not apparent that

the current U.S. president shares such a commitment.

One of the axioms of those involved in peace-building is that each conflict situation has its own history and dynamic. Hence one of the key requirements of anyone seeking to intervene constructively is a sensitivity to the particularities of each situation in their conflict analysis. Unfortunately, reading some of the contributors in the first half of the book one gets the sense that too many of them believe in a 'one size fits all' kind of analytical framework. Nowhere is this more apparent than with Joseph Montville when he asserts, "Human needs theory is essential to understanding the genesis of political conflict in general and of ethnic and sectarian conflict and violence in particular. It is also critical to the design of effective conflict resolution intervention strategies in the cause of genuine peace and justice." (p. 130)

One of the gaps in the collection is any attempt to engage with the all-too-common uncritical reliance on notions of 'basic needs' to 'explain' the dynamics of conflict situations. Just to take one example, in the concluding chapter the observation is made that 'achieving reconciliation, justice and peace is connected with meeting basic human needs (such as security, recognition, equality, and identity).' (p. 344) Most would agree that for our sense of well-being it would be desirable to feel secure, be acknowledged, have a clear sense of who we are in relation to others. Indeed many of us might argue that these should be basic human rights, but would we call these 'basic needs'? A term such as 'basic need' presumably should refer to some universal condition, applicable to all, that must be fulfilled for human survival. Can we seriously suggest that 'equality' is such a basic need? Equality with regard to what? How can 'equality' be a 'basic need'? In a lot of circumstances it is not even desirable as a human right. It is as farcical as insisting that democracy (in the sense of respect for majority opinion) is a basic need and as such is the most appropriate form of decision-making in all areas of life.

Underpinning the structure of the book is the distinction between 'theory' and 'practice'

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that is common to similar collections. Such a distinction is somewhat artificial, insofar as most forms of peace-building activity are informed by some kind of analytical framework that guides the intervention. Indeed, it is in the practice that the theory 'comes alive' – and this book really 'comes alive' in the second half with a series of fascinating analyses and commentaries on the tensions involved in pursuing the goals of peace and justice as a basis for coexistence and reconciliation in different situations.

Hizkias Assefa presents an account of his intervention in a communal clash in Northern Ghana that will go straight on to my reading list for students. His analysis of the way in which he and his colleagues worked to develop peace constituencies on both sides of the community divide is a classic. Moreover, he reminds us of the significance of the spiritual dimension in peace-building when one is dealing with people of faith.

By contrast with Assefa's 'bottom-up' approach, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was very much a 'top-down' process shaped by national political agendas rather than the demands of victims and local communities. The tension between justice and peace in South Africa was managed by reference to the restorative dimension of justice lying at the heart of the African notion of *ubuntu* – valuing the restoration of community and humanity above the punishment of perpetrators. In his contribution Hugo van der Merwe takes this argument seriously, but highlights the contradictions between top-down and bottom-up models of restorative justice. For example, he refers to the concern of the TRC with symbolic interactions (performances?) that took on significance because of the way they could be conveyed to a wider public. By contrast, people at the level of the local community sought something more: "While symbolic gestures and public images were seen as relevant, they did not replace the need for direct practical interventions."

Few of the contributors present a gendered view of peace-building, but in her mapping of the different dimensions of peace-

building work in Northern Ireland Mari Fitzduff highlights the pioneering and courageous role played by women in attempts over the years to reach across the community divide, a divide that remains as strong as ever in spite of (or perhaps because of) the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

Other contributions worthy of note include Wendy Lambourne's comparative study of the methods of managing the tensions between peace and justice in Rwanda and Cambodia, Barry Hart's analysis of the problems of facilitating the return of the displaced in Bosnia, and Amy Hubbard's insights into the dynamics of dialogue

groups based on her own participation in Jewish-Palestinian encounters in the USA.

Overall this is an excellent collection of essays. Its breadth of coverage is remarkable, both with regard to the case study material and the range of issues raised relating to that core dilemma that lies at the heart of much peace-building work: How do you pursue justice and attempt to 'set things right' whilst at the same time promoting harmony between adversaries?

Andrew Rigby

## **People, Peace and Power: Conflict Transformation in Action ( London: Pluto Press, 2002)**

*This review is written by Carol Rank*

I was refreshed and delighted by Diana Francis' new book, *People, Peace and Power: Conflict Transformation in Action*. Too often in the past, the language and understandings of nonviolence have been lacking from texts on conflict resolution. Conflict resolution theorists and nonviolent activists seemingly lived in separate worlds. Diana has brought those two worlds together in a powerful and effective way.

The first section of her book provides an excellent overview of conflict transformation. She presents a careful and insightful analysis of various schools of thought in the field, addressing issues related to educational process (with reference to Paulo Freire), human needs and human rights, culture, gender, and power. The theory and practice of nonviolence, and the fundamental importance of respect – for individuals and for other cultures – forms the basis of her analysis and her approach to her work.

The second section of the book, which forms the bulk of it, focuses on conflict transformation workshops as 'the most widely practised form of nonviolent intervention.' She draws on her many years of experience as a trainer, describing in great detail some of the conflict transformation workshops she has run in different settings throughout the world. These descriptions are frank, honest and sometimes very personal. She is generous in offering the specific approaches, activities

and resources which she has developed and used, and notes that most trainers use a 'patchwork' approach, drawing on and adapting the work of others, and learning from the participants themselves.

The 'stories' she tells are powerful because they describe 'ordinary' people coming to grips with the pain and complexities of violent conflict and taking an active role in peacebuilding in their own societies. She highlights the many pitfalls trainers should seek to avoid, including the imposition of Western 'expertise.' Quoting Abu Nimur, she notes that training can be seen as a "suspect gift from the powerful to the disempowered". However, she also warns that trainers must beware of an uncritical acceptance of 'traditional' methods which can embody their own kinds of oppression, particularly in relation to gender.

The final section of the book gives some principles for 'best practice' in running conflict transformation workshops, then returns to some of the underlying themes and concepts presented in the first section,

drawing the previous two sections together. Overall, the book is inspiring and empowering. It is a rich resource for conflict transformation trainers, and it shows how conflict transformation workshops can sow the seeds of peace in war-torn societies throughout the world.

*Carol Rank*

## **CCTS: Participating Organisations**

International Fellowship of Reconciliation,  
Alkmaar

War Resisters International, London

Richardson Institute for Peace Research,  
Lancaster

Quaker Peace & Social Witness, London

Responding to Conflict, Birmingham

International Alert, London

Conflict Analysis and Development Unit,  
London

Conciliation Resources, London

Centre for Study of Forgiveness &  
Reconciliation, Coventry

Moldovan Initiative Committee of Management,  
Belfast

Community Development Action International,  
London

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