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New Routes

A JOURNAL OF PEACE RESEARCH AND ACTION

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The role of media in war and peace

Also in this issue:

**Human Rights in
Argentina**

**Peacebuilding in
Somalia**

Contents

- 3 Complexity - the first victim in war**
Alice Petré
- 6 Access to media - a privilege or a right?**
Orla Clinton
- 9 Media as agents for peacebuilding**
Basil Nyama
- 11 Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Roadmap to a balanced media picture**
Marda Dunsky
- 15 Israel-Palestine: 'Our' victims are tragedy - 'theirs' are statistics**
Orly Halpern
- 17 Pax Americana or World Peace?**
Hans Romkema
- 20 Argentina: The painful march towards reconciliation**
Anders Ruuth
- 24 From Life and Work to Life and Peace**
Björn Ryman
- 26 Pour une paix durable en RDC: Le point de vue du la population**
Hélène Morvan
- 28 Ten years and many lessons learned**
Thania Paffenholz
- 30 News, resources and reviews**
- 32 Meet Elsi Takala, LPI Board**

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Media – a tool for peace or a weapon of war?

The concept 'media' gives rise to many associations in different directions: to mediate, to be a medium or a mediator ... Or are they really different? They all imply the meaning of something that transfers something bigger than itself. A messenger carrying bad news or good news, helping people to communicate.

Like many "tools" used by human beings, media can serve good or evil purposes. Free, independent, objective media make people think, reflect and meet in an atmosphere of openness. At its best, media may promote peace and understanding. All too often, though, media are used to manipulate the truth, to exaggerate or to diminish facts. With the help of military or political power, and, not least, with the (mis)use of money, media can be a weapon of war, a threat to freedom.

Not too long ago, during World War II, we could see the horrifying effects of the fact that media could not or would not reveal the truth. "We did not know", as people claimed in and around Germany, when the concentration camps were opened. How was it possible? we may ask ourselves today, when it is almost impossible to "escape" the flow of media.

With modern information technology, it is very difficult to conceal the deeds and misdeeds of a regime. But the same technology also gives an enormous potential for manipulation of facts. What is, in essence, facts, and what is a mixture of assumptions, rumours and opinions? How to find the shelf with reliable information in the huge department store of news, sensations, comments and analyses?

"The media can make or break a peace process", says Senzo Ngubane, a researcher with the African Centre for

the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, in *Conflict Prevention Newsletter*, May 2003. As eager as media are to give a minute-to-minute reporting from the battle scene (like the one in Afghanistan or in Iraq), as silent are they, once the drama is over and the long and winding road to peace is to begin. The situation in the aftermath of a war is very fragile. A peace agreement is no guarantee for sustainable peace.

Several of the articles in this issue of *New Routes* reflect on the possibilities and challenges of media.



Radio and Internet are said to be the most important sources of news and information in modern society. In war-torn communities, like for example Liberia, media can either help to make former enemies co-operate, or, at worst, shatter a fragile peace process. Photo: Jonas Ekström

Alice Petré writes about the risk for an oversimplified reality, when weapons speak louder than freedom. Orla Clinton lifts up alternative voices to the media industry, and Basil Nyama sees media as a potential agent for peace. What kind of peace are we facing in the future? asks Hans Romkema in an article. Two articles with examples from Israel-Palestine consider the delicate question of balance in the media picture.

In this journal you will find analyses and reflections of the peace and reconciliation processes in Argentina and Somalia, and of the people's hope for peace in the DRC. Read also about the conference twenty years ago that led to the creation of the Life and Peace Institute.

Media without readers, watchers, listeners are dead. Welcome to share your reactions, views and impressions!

Kristina Lundqvist

Complexity the first victim in war

Free and independent journalism in conflict-ridden countries is a delicate issue. A stereotypic division of people into “us and them” is a threat to nuances and impartiality.

In a number of examples from different countries, the author gives a personal reflection on the challenges that meet reporters of today. Is the world facing a “new journalistic order” after the Iraq war?

- Of course, we would publish a photo of a policeman stopping two men in the street, even if we learn that the suspects are in fact innocent, said the group of Congolese reporters in one voice.

- What will that mean for the suspects? I asked. For their families? And for what purpose would you do it?

- It's an event. It's something that has happened. And also, we got a photo! they answered, reflecting neither on the message they may convey, nor on the responsibilities of media and individual reporters.

This debate was one among many others in the workshop “Journalism in Peace and Conflict” arranged by the Life & Peace Institute in Congo-Brazzaville in

relevance of portraying two innocent men as criminals was out of their scope – they had a photo!

Journalists in Congo-Brazzaville, like their colleagues in too many countries, are used to war and violence, to propaganda and the views of the elite, to corruption and bribes, to impunity and injustice, and have little experience of peace, truth and human rights. Or of a free and professional journalism. So they are megaphones to their master's voice, whoever that may be.

The main part of the Congolese reporters is connected to one of the many political camps in the country and reluctant to bite the hand that feeds them. Although they all agreed that information, facts and truth are main objectives for journalism, their

proof of a preparedness to improve. Although in opposition to each other, they had managed to elect an Ombudsman for media, Bernard Makiza, a senior full of integrity and without illusions. Too old to challenge anyone for a position, he encourages a strengthened position through individual, as well as collective, actions.

Open discussions could bring out nuances and hinder the pattern of “us and them”. But marked by last year's bloody fights close to Brazzaville in the Pool-region, they could not resist becoming aggressive, irritated and using a very harsh tone when talking of the war, the military and the Ninja-militiamen, who just entered the capital to surrender.

Despite statements by the information minister in favour of a free press, the obstacles are big. And the efforts for change may meet new counter-productive forces.

New order for journalists

The war in Iraq may have formed a new road map, not only for the political order, but also for journalists. Events and statements create uneasiness. Many reporters around the world are worried that the Iraq war will lead to a regression in freedom of press in their countries. If the USA, the country which refers to itself as the prime democracy in the world, is arguing along lines used in Banana Republics, “if you are not with us – you are against us”, then why would our leaders listen to arguments about democracy, they wonder.

One critical event was when American forces opened fire at Hotel Palestine in Baghdad and killed two media persons. Independent

Impartiality, objectives, ethics and reliability are complicated issues in a conflict zone.

November, 2002. Impartiality, objectives, ethics and reliability in sources are complicated issues for all reporters, and even more so, of course, in a conflict zone like Congo-Brazzaville. To question the

daily practice proved differently. Impartiality was desirable, but how to do when you don't even have money for transport to an interview or a site?

This workshop was, however, the

witnesses testified that the US soldiers had been present for two hours and that the shooting was not an impulsive act.

Afterwards, the spokesperson for the Pentagon, the American headquarters for defence, Victoria Clarke, indicated that the journalists themselves were to blame. Pentagon had warned that Baghdad would become a dangerous area, and as long as they were not embedded, being a journalist there would be extremely risky. But the steps between the warning and the attack ought to lead to more than just a shrugging of shoulders. Could anyone ever imagine a similar attack against American reporters being treated that way?

The same day in Baghdad, the Arabic TV-station Al Jazeera lost a colleague in an air strike by the US forces. As in Kabul in Afghanistan, the TV-station suspected that Americans consciously tried to silence what they saw as pro-Iraqi-propaganda. There has been an intensive debate about the profile of Al Jazeera's reporting, and opinions differ whether it is independent journalism or not. But the same goes for the American Fox Television and CNN.

Drawing a line between information and propaganda is a subtle art. This is most obvious in the middle of a conflict. The laws and conventions for war crimes are formulated in general terms and subject to interpretations. A TV-station can be a legitimate target for attack, if it is used for military purposes. This is, thus, a subject for interpretation. The question arises of who does the interpreting in the middle of a war?

No prisoners – only assassinated journalists

Colombia is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for media. There, reporters are not put into dark, humid dripping cells, when they do their job and act independently. Instead, they are

assassinated in cold blood. Many Colombian reporters live in exile. Last year, five journalists were killed, 60 kidnapped or had their lives threatened and 20 went into exile, according to accounts by the NGO Reporters Without Borders. This organisation fights for press freedom by protests to governments against infringements.

The fighting parties, the military, the para-military, the FARC-guerilla and the drug-mafia, have all made journalists a direct target in the conflict in the country. Once again a free press that could contribute to dialogue and give voice to all actors is stopped in an "us and them"-argument.

With support from the Swedish International Development Agency, the Swedish section of Reporters Without Borders is about to assist several Colombian media-organisations to strengthen the position of the reporters. This includes a range of issues, from awareness-raising on the reporter's role in the conflict, to practical measures like alert systems.

Ukraine and Belarus are two other countries, where reporters run high risks of being murdered. In September 2000, the young Ukrainian Georgy Gongadze was killed after disclosure of corruption at the very highest level in the country and challenging president Leonid Kuchma in a TV-debate. Tape recordings by one of the president's bodyguards revealed that he was involved in the attack on the reporter, but the prosecutor has dismissed the evidence and the case is still open.

Impunity is an enormous problem in connection with attacks on journalists. The listing of predators that are free is long. In this context, the comments from the Pentagon become worrying. The Iraq war has marked new attempts to dehumanise "them" and describe "them" as evil-makers, and reporters among the Allied forces bought that language. Sources tend to stay anonymous and



Ninjas, ex-militia in Brazzaville, and their future is part of the story to be reported in Congo. Photo: Alice Petrán

are often isolated. The basic principle – verify with other sources – is not applied as widely as before.

The big losers in this new order are probably people like the average Congolese. What chances are they given to orient themselves to make decisions in their lives? The responsibility lies on all levels, on the international community, on governmental levels, and with the individual.

The Congolese Media ombudsman, Bernard Makiza, believes that every person is an important pillar and has a task to fulfil to achieve a correct, multifaceted and impartial view.

Alice Petrán

Access to media - a privilege or a right?

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." (Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

The recent media coverage of the war in Iraq and earlier Afghanistan has left many disenchanted with the mechanisms of the media.

Few would argue with the vision inherent in Article 19. Today, with the dramatic development of technological advances, immediate images from conflict, and to a lesser extent post conflict zones, are beamed directly into our living rooms. And yet, at no other time do we seem less informed. Either you possess a relentless interest to pursue alternative sources of information, to challenge what is conveyed and find some truth at some level. Or like most of us, you continue to be robbed of your most basic right not only to be informed but also to be credibly informed.

Whose rights and needs we are talking about in Article 19 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? The recent media coverage of the war in Iraq and earlier in Afghanistan has left many disenchanted with the

minority of us with other alternatives to discern particular types of information.

Yet, for the majority a worrying trend is that their information needs have been met through such massive media bombardment campaigns, as was the case with Iraq. On closer examination though, some media, for example, the American cable channels, served as little more than camouflages for their own side. Whose rights and needs were answered in Iraq? Was the American public, who watches these networks, informed in a credible way?

At the other end of the scale, media in the south continue to be excluded, as the business of reporting high profile wars costs excessive amounts of money. Few media outlets in Africa possess the resources to compete with international media. They are left to rely on and

but a few. How did countries in Africa report the Iraq war and what are the repercussions?

Perhaps the most glaring result, particularly for Africa, is the shift in focus. As Iraq or Afghanistan becomes front-page news, other conflicts with equally, if not more serious humanitarian consequences, continue unabated but yet simply ignored or relegated to a few pitiless lines or words.

Media – a tool for change

The role of the media and information has never been more recognised as a valuable tool for change. A tremendous amount of work to eliminate some of the imbalances noted above goes quietly unnoticed. Often these projects are initiatives from within the media itself and have long term development and change as their main priority.

Concerned at the disintegrating standards within their profession, many dedicated media professionals are going some way towards closing the huge gaps between north and south. They have established organisations committed to correcting some of these inherent injustices.

Internews Network (www.internews.org) is a non-profit organisation supporting open media worldwide. It fosters independent media in emerging democracies, produces innovative television and programming and Internet content, and uses the media to mediate conflicts within and between countries. Currently, they have programmes spanning the former Soviet Union, East and West Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Southeast Asia, and the United States.

Their latest initiative is a conference to design the legal framework for a

Some media served as little more than camouflages for their own side.

mechanisms of the media and the political machine that often drives it. Of course the Internet provides a

are ever more dependent on American, British and Arabic news. And even then, access to these sources is open to

democratic media in Iraq held June 1–3 in Athens, Greece. Leading Iraqi, Arab and Western media experts will convene to develop a set of policy recommendations for legal and regulatory reforms in Iraq. These reforms are meant to foster free, pluralistic media in Iraq.

“The Iraqi people suffered under one of the world’s most repressive regimes, which used the media to maintain control over almost every aspect of Iraqi life. Now they face new dangers posed by the lack of any media law or authority,” said Markos Kounalakis, Chair of the Internews Network board in a press statement. “This conference is designed to help create a framework for a new media architecture in Iraq, as part of the process of building democracy.”

Similarly, the Institute for War & Peace Reporting, IWPR (www.iwpr.net), strengthens local journalism in areas of conflict. By training reporters, facilitating dialogue and providing reliable information, it supports peace, democracy and development in societies undergoing crisis and change. IWPR says its work is distinguished by intensive on-the-job training, practical collaboration between international and regional journalists to transfer skills and experience for the long term.

IWPR base their work on an integrated programme that aims to improve the capacity of local journalists to produce balanced and accurate reporting in the public interest. The activities are designed to contribute to public understanding of political issues within the region as well as internationally, with an emphasis on democratisation, human rights, conflict resolution and development.

Both Internews and IWPR have been highly commended for their involvement in the war crimes tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Supporting people’s right to know and to bring the process of justice closer, daily print news coverage including broadcasting has enabled affected



*Information is the foundation of all human rights – especially vital in times of crisis.
Photo: Pressens Bild*

populations to be part of a process that would otherwise be denied to them.

Media in crisis situations

Media Action International, MAI (www.mai.org), is another organisation bridging some of the imbalances in reporting from conflict and post conflict zones. Their aim is to promote a more effective use of the media to help local populations in crises and to strengthen the role of information in humanitarian and development initiatives. “We believe that information is the foundation of all human rights – and that it is especially vital in times of crisis”, part of their mission statement reads.

They promote the effective use of

upon a global network of print, broadcast and Internet professionals with extensive humanitarian and development experience, MAI aims to provide reliable information to populations affected by conflicts and disasters. They also advocate the importance of credible, independent information in all humanitarian, peacekeeping, recovery and development initiatives.

Ed Girardet, founding member and president of MAI, concedes, however, that the media coverage in Iraq makes it now more of a struggle to convince people of the need for credible information.

“How can we go to Iraq and teach them, when we have this record?” he asks, referring to what he regarded as

How did countries in Africa report the Iraq war?

credible, independent media for the benefit of vulnerable populations in crisis and post-crisis situations. Drawing

the dismal reporting from some of the American networks. “Where lies our credibility?”

Independence is another issue which the war has put central stage. Girardet says that more than ever before, the need to be cautious is imperative. He stresses that programmes, particularly those relating to information, must be multi-donor

MAI has been involved in and supporting practical endeavours. In Rwanda the successful use of freeplay wind up and solar powered radios provide a supplemental role and sustainable access to information and education for child led families. In a

All human beings have a right to information that is credible.

funded. "How can you argue independence if you are one hundred percent funded from the US?" he asks.

Whereas Internews and IWRP tend to increase the capacity of experienced journalists, MAI aims to educate them at the early stage. In Afghanistan, MAI has been training young journalists from the three main universities. All ethnic groups are represented with a 60/40 male/female ratio. An important result of this programme has been the production of a youth magazine, which is distributed to high schools. MAI is also responsible for the Afghan Monitor, a multi media interactive forum providing up to date information on Afghanistan.

country with only seven percent school enrolment, these radios are the only sources of information and education for a majority of children.

The success of the Talking Drum Studio initiated by Search for Common Ground in Sierra Leone and Liberia is producing radio programmes by children for children.

While encouraged by the progress made, Ed Girardet feels incredulous that you still have to keep stressing that information has an impact. "We still spend so much time having to advocate information. All human beings have a right to information that is credible, allowing them to be informed, so that they can make choices relevant to their surroundings."

Ecumenical news service

Within the ecumenical family, an initiative was taken after the September 11 events to set up an electronic newsletter with particular focus on church voices and other alternative perspectives to the Northern media. The service is called Behind the News: Visions of Peace and Voices of Faith (website: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/behindthenews>). Behind it stand the World Council of Churches, Action by Churches Together and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance.

The purpose of Behind the News is to provide useful, unique, and diverse information on the current situation of global conflict. Given the dominance of the Northern media in reporting developments, Behind the News strives to circulate statements and action plans by churches, ecumenical bodies, and church-related organizations in other regions, particularly Asia and the Middle East. Analyses and reflections both from within the church constituencies and from other faith communities are also presented.

Orla Clinton

New report from LPI

Dr. Thania Paffenholz, peacebuilding researcher and practitioner, has studied LPI's work in Somalia from the early 1990s. She found out that LPI has developed its own specific peacebuilding approach. In this study, "Community-based Bottom-up Peacebuilding", she draws many lessons that can be used in other contexts and by other organisations working in this field, for example, the empowerment of civil society, even in the absence of organised civil society groups.

To study LPI's experiences is not only valuable for LPI itself but for the

entire peacebuilding community. Lessons for future practise of peacebuilding can be drawn, as well as theoretical reflections that serve to develop the theoretical concept of peacebuilding.

This book makes the important experiences of LPI in Somalia available for the interested community of researchers and practitioners of conflict transformation and peacebuilding.

The book will be released in July. Order your copy by e-mail to order@life-peace.org already now.



Coming in July.

Media as agents for peacebuilding

There is a need to explore the value and the role of media in its entirety – electronic, print, and narrow casting – including their outlets for the promotion of civil society processes, such as change of behaviour, peacebuilding and reconciliation. This is both crucial and vital, particularly in the Horn of Africa region, which continues to be devastated by violent and protracted conflicts.

If peacebuilding means strengthening the prospects for peace¹ in conflict-countries and enhancing the capacities of the civil society for non-violent conflict transformation, then media ought to be perceived, and strengthened as a component and a powerful tool of the wider civil society that has a stake in social changes, as well as in peacebuilding.

We live in a time in history when many social norms and behaviours are becoming increasingly mediated and globalized. This exchange of information in the twenty-first century includes the sharing of value systems and meanings. As the process of human interaction is becoming increasingly mediated, social relations are more and more characterised by the sharing of universally accepted and defined sets of information, and the access and claim to universally accepted basic rights, even in regard to behaviour and social institutions.

This means that no single individual or social structure can take upon itself the monopoly of determining or imposing on people (or society) a socially acceptable set of moral values, virtues or meanings. Thus, it is necessary and useful for society to utilise media to bring changes to life, especially in a

region of protracted conflicts, such as the greater Horn of Africa.

Although there are known cases in Africa and in the Horn of Africa region where media have been used to stir up conflict and exacerbate war, the power of media to transform violent conflicts into non-violent ones is too crucial to be underestimated. Given the fact that media are a power that must be reckoned with, and are civil society agents and tools that can provide positive change and peacebuilding, it is imperative to invest in media, as well as to tap their potential.

Strengthened media can and should bring about positive change, even in the greater Horn of Africa. For example, free and strengthened media can promote a popular culture of participatory democracy, basic human

rights, coexistence, tolerance, and peace. As bearers of early warning indicators, media have helped to remove dictatorial regimes, highlighted gross violations of human rights and fostered justice and reconciliation. Media can inform, educate, and enlighten citizens. They have promoted environmental protection and have backed the struggle against the HIV/AIDS pandemic. These examples are indicative of the fact that, if strengthened as agents and/or tools for peacebuilding and other positive social changes, media have numerous values.

Robin Hay has stated that media have obvious values² in several contexts. As outlets for divergent opinions, media can assure people that society is moving towards a healthy openness in dealing with its affairs or conflicts. As watchdogs on politicians and civil servants, free media can hold members of society and government accountable for their actions.

Media can monitor and report on human rights violations and can provide warnings concerning potential renewals of violent conflicts early enough for these situations to be addressed or, at the very least, prepared for.

Advisory media

For example, it was excellent for the Life & Peace Institute to continue to

The power of media to transform violent conflicts into non-violent ones is crucial.

rights, coexistence, tolerance, and peace. As bearers of early warning indi-

advocate a participatory and popular peace, such as in Somalia, via Horn of



A Swedish-Tanzanian film team producing a documentary about HIV/aids in Tanzania. Photo: Tore Samuelsson

Africa Bulletin. We believe that articles such as Johan Svensson's "Popular peace for Somalia this time?"³ can solicit favourable responses and actions. In some instances, it is possible for media recommendations or highlightings to influence the making of decisions by regional or international institutions on matters of concern.

It is sad to note that media have, in some African instances, contributed considerably to some of the many social and political upheavals. Perhaps due to reasons of ownership and purpose, as well as misinformation due to false or flawed information databases, media have contributed toward wayward behaviours that promote vices that destroy society.

promote all kinds of vices and violence, all detrimental to society. They can encourage what I may call the *gun-and-blood culture*, e.g. propaganda that promotes ethnic cleansing, ethnicity, selfish hegemony, reprisal, repression, racism, genocide, such as the one in Rwanda, etc). At other times they can be motivated by incorrect interpretations and practice of limited spheres of life, such as religious, ideological or theological hermeneutics. To see how media is a persuasive tool of communication, one needs only to flashback to the recent war in Iraq.

The realities of an almost contagious form of social behaviour and *modus operandi* of communication in a globalized world imply that

room for attitudes of indifference instead of togetherness for a just world! Increased global forms of interactions are constantly bombarding societies. Though we live in a world without a fence, we cannot run away from its realities.

For these and many others reasons, media's pervasive and positive influence on life can be harnessed and made to strengthen peacebuilding processes. And this shall be done, to the benefit of mankind in this region, as well as to the stability and peaceful coexistence of the wider humanity.

Governments, politicians and the civil society should move away from the socially held imagery that likens media to "vultures" to a perception that supports and develops them as integral aspects or agents of the wider civil society that are vital for peacebuilding.

Basil BS Nyama

¹ Robin Hay, *Media and peacebuilding*, Global Affairs Research Partners for the Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society

² Ibid.

³ *Horn of Africa Bulletin*, Vol. 14, No. 5. Sept-Oct 2002

Regular news from the Horn of Africa

Get updated through the Horn of Africa Bulletin

LPI's Horn of Africa Bulletin, produced in Nairobi, provides a digest of news and views from Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Somaliland and Sudan. Covering issues of domestic politics, relief, economics, health and others, the Bulletin monitors the development. Editor: Basil BS Nyama.

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Media have helped to remove dictatorial regimes.

Indeed, if recklessly used, media as social agents have the potential to nothing any longer exists in isolation. An indication that there is very little

Israeli-Palestinian conflict: Roadmap to a balanced media picture

With a one-sided view on a complicated conflict like the Israeli-Palestinian one, both American papers and English-language Israeli press tend to give the readers a biased picture of the situation. Whether important details are left out, or specific events are described in generalizing terms, neither “ditch” offers a fair, balanced coverage of all sides of the case, according to the author who is a supervisor for students in journalism.

I follow news of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict closely. Like many Americans, I consume the usual ‘name-brand’ U.S. mainstream media sources of information. But I do not consider my daily briefing complete until I have read the English-language Israeli press online. It is here one finds the very small details that generate the dramatic events we are witnessing now – the suicide bombings and military incursions and diplomatic initiatives. But many of these details are rarely reported by mainstream American media.

In July 2001 the Israeli newspapers Ha’aretz and the *Jerusalem Post* published English-language online reports of an incident that was also reported by the Associated Press. Despite the exposure, then, that American foreign correspondents and editors had to the story, it was not picked up widely by U.S. media. The incident is symbolic, emblematic, a corroborative piece in a larger pattern that has gone all but unreported by most U.S. mainstream media in any significant detail.

The 300-word AP report, dated July 30 and written by reporter Laurie

Copans, can be found in the Lexis-Nexus database. It reads:

“The Israeli army said Monday that a group of soldiers beat a Palestinian traveling in a taxi, forced the passengers to beat each other, and slashed the tires of a vehicle.

Responding to a complaint by an Israeli human rights group, the army acknowledged the soldiers ‘acted with brutality toward passengers’ and said it was investigating the July 23 incident outside the West Bank city of Hebron.

According to witness accounts compiled by the human rights group B’Tselem, three jeeps with soldiers detained 12 Palestinian passengers in two taxis. After letting

beat one man until he was barely conscious, the B’Tselem report said.

– Move, let me show you how to beat, one soldier said to another when he wanted a turn at hitting the Palestinian, according to the report.

Pointing guns at the Palestinians, the soldiers forced the eight remaining men in the two taxis to beat one another.

– With tears falling from his eyes, the young [Palestinian] man started to beat us with his fist on our faces and heads, passenger Khaled Rawashdeh, 36, said in the report. Rawashdeh said soldiers pointed a gun to the man and told him to beat harder.

Four of the Palestinians needed hospital treatment afterward, the report added. An army statement acknowledged that a soldier made passengers hit one another, and another soldier slashed the tires of a taxi.

The army statement referred to only one taxi, not two. Neither the army statement nor the B’Tselem report gave any motive for the soldiers’ actions.

The army chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, condemned the

What does a picture of land confiscation look like?

an elderly man, a woman and a child go, the soldiers told the taxis to drive through an olive orchard to a hidden spot where two soldiers

soldiers’ actions, saying such cases cause the army great damage, the Ha’aretz newspaper reported Monday.”



Jerusalem, a symbol of division and conflicts. Photo: Bernt Jonsson

What is missing

If we are to analyse U.S. mainstream media reporting of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, then we should examine what is not there as well as what is. Let us consider three missing elements in this coverage.

The first of these elements is details of Palestinian daily life under occupation as it has existed in one form or another, in periods of low crisis and high crisis, for the last 35 years. I would argue that these details have been given very scant attention in the reporting of the conflict, because until now they have not been deemed an important enough obstacle to the pursuit of U.S. interests in the Middle East. This has left the American public without a complete picture of why what is happening now is happening. We are seeing the effect to the near exclusion of the cause.

The pictures we see of the exploded buses and the shattered Passover seder tables and the ambulances collecting the Israeli dead and wounded on the streets of Jerusalem, Hadera and Haifa

are gut-wrenching and horrific. They are an important part of the story. But they do not constitute the full picture.

Where were the cameras when the Palestinian taxi passengers were made to beat each other by Israeli soldiers? What does a picture of land confiscation look like? What does a picture of the additional 90,000 Israeli settlers who moved to the West Bank, nearly doubling the settlement population during the seven years of the Oslo peace process, look like? How about the 7,000 Palestinian houses reported by Israeli and international human-rights groups to have been destroyed since 1967 – not including those houses destroyed by the Israeli military since the second Intifada broke out?

In the early part of 2002 we saw a spate of mainstream media reports under the collective headline ‘The making of a suicide bomber.’ These reports have appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune* and *Newsweek*, and on ‘Nightline’ and ‘The

NewsHour’, among others.

But if the media are just finding out what goes into the making of a suicide bomber because suicide bombing has become a recurring phenomenon, then it stands to reason that something – many things – have been left out of the reporting of this conflict all along the way.

The other day I was discussing this issue with a friend of mine who is an editor on the *Chicago Tribune* foreign desk. He said: ‘We don’t report on the building until it catches on fire; we don’t write about the lake until someone drowns in it.’ True enough. But over time, the media should be reporting on the small details of the conflict that lead up to the large ones – before the fire becomes a conflagration and before the victims are being dragged dead from the water.

International aspects

The second element often missing in reportage of the conflict is explicit acknowledgement that a body of international law and consensus exists that is relevant to competing Israeli and Palestinian demands and claims – but the U.S. foreign policy tilt toward Israel has consistently marginalized these important international aspects. Let me illustrate with a swatch of analysis on coverage of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

The Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza – where some 200,000 Israeli colonists live among 3.2 million Palestinians – are a key issue in the resolution of the conflict. Yet there has been a virtual absence of critical reporting in the mainstream media on the question of how, directly or indirectly, U.S. aid contributes to Israel’s ability to absorb the cost of building, enlarging and defending the settlements.

In November 2000, the Israeli organization Peace Now reported that the government of then-Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak had earmarked \$300 million for the settlements in 2001, a figure that

represented a mere ten percent of Israel's overall foreign-aid package from the United States for fiscal year 2001. Similarly, reporting on the Clinton administration's long-term efforts to advance the peace process rarely if ever analysed the inherent contradiction between that intensive U.S. mediation and these facts about the settlements:

- that they are illegal under the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which the United States is a signatory;
- that they contravene UN Resolution 242, a pillar of the U.S.-brokered Oslo accords;
- and that successive Israeli governments have continually enlarged the settlements since the accords were signed, nearly doubling their population from approximately 110,000 in 1993 to 200,000 by the time of the Camp David negotiations in July 2000.

From June to December 2000, six major newspapers published seven stories on West Bank settlements. *The Baltimore Sun*, *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *New York Times* and *Washington Post* all ran long stories datelined from different West Bank settlements during that period; the *Los Angeles Times* ran two such stories. In general, the pieces got considerable play: they averaged 1,300 words in length, two ran on the front page and five were illustrated with multiple photos.

All of the stories revolved around the settlers' various points of view, religious and secular. The reporting focused on how the violence had disrupted the settlers' quality of life and their anxieties over what negotiations could bring. Of the six papers, only the *Los Angeles Times*, in one of its two stories, mentioned – in a passing reference – that the settlements are illegal under international law. Only two of the seven stories (the same *Times* piece and the *Post* story) quoted Palestinians, also in passing, on their view of how the settlements affect their lives and the peace process.

Most of the stories mentioned the housing subsidies that the Israeli government extends to settlers. But none of the stories reported how much Israel has invested in order to build and defend the 140 settlements and their supporting infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza since 1967. None of the stories explored how this investment is likely to affect the determination of final borders in a negotiated settlement. Most of the stories gave a figure for the settler population, but none of the stories put that figure into the context of the Palestinian-settler population ratio, which is 15:1.

Unequal partners in the conflict

The third missing element in mainstream media coverage of the conflict is anything approaching consistent acknowledgment or recognition that the two parties to the conflict are not equal – and that this is so largely by virtue of the fact of the historic U.S. political, military and diplomatic relationship with the State of Israel. Further, reporting of the conflict minimizes or omits altogether the fact that this relationship has continued unchanged even as the U.S. has claimed for itself the role of 'honest broker' in the last decade of the peace process.

Diplomatic and political coverage of the conflict rarely challenges the tone or content of official Washington parlance, which routinely characterizes the Israelis and the Palestinians as if they were equals in the war they are making on each other. From the standpoint of each side's right to live in peace, security and dignity, yes, they are equal. But from the standpoint of the political, diplomatic, economic and military

It is one thing for the Israeli government to claim that Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority are 'not doing enough to prevent terror' and for the American president and secretary of state to repeat this mantra incessantly. Such statements are newsworthy and should be reported as such. But where are the American analysts from beyond the Beltway – not to mention Palestinian and Arab representatives – to remind us, when this mantra is invoked, that Israel under the Sharon government has consistently and systematically destroyed the physical infrastructure of the Palestinian Authority? Israel and the U.S. expect Arafat and the Palestinian leadership to act as statesmen and security agents, but many of the physical tools to do so have been denied or taken away.

Lesson No. 1, Day 1, Reporting 101: For every argument, especially in a conflict situation, there is an equal and opposite argument. Get both sides.

Implications, qualifications, prescriptions

What are the implications of these three holes in U.S. mainstream reporting of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which are, to recap:

- The lack of the details of Palestinian daily life under occupation
- The lack of acknowledgement that international law and consensus relevant to the conflict have been marginalized by U.S. foreign policy
- The lack of recognition that the parties to the conflict are in many important ways not equal

The absence of these details from our context-deficient daily diet of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict-cum-war

**For every argument, especially
in a conflict situation, there is an
equal opposite argument.**

weapons each side brings to this war, they are not.

pose several dangers. First, it leads many in this country to the mistaken

postulate that what we are now witnessing can be distilled into an Israeli war against Palestinian terrorism, much the same argument that has been made for the U.S. military campaign against the Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan – even though the two phenomena are but superficially similar. This line of argument leads to the inevitable conclusion that military force should be the prime instrument in finding solutions to these conflicts.

The second danger is that the absence of these details exposes those who would reveal them – be they individuals, news organizations or even whole societies (in Europe and the Arab world) to charges of anti-Semitism and other epithets.

But the third danger is perhaps the greatest. It is that the absence of the three elements in U.S. mainstream media reporting of the conflict analysed here has retarded to near paralysis the ability of American citizens, as individuals or in groups, to demand and

receive accountability from their government for a failed U.S. Middle East policy. It is a policy that is being conducted by our government in all of our names but without the consent of many. This puts at risk not only chances for a sustainable Middle East peace, but it also jeopardizes the safety of Americans at home as well as our national interests and credibility abroad.

Now for some qualifications. As someone who has worked as an editor and a reporter in the mainstream media, and as one who now helps prepare students for journalism careers, I would like to offer two qualifiers to the foregoing critique. The first is that while media criticism is legitimate and important, we should nevertheless neither blame the messenger nor view the media as being responsible for solving the conflict.

The second qualifier is that it is impossible to expect each individual news report to deliver full historical context and exact symmetrical balance.

The constraints of space and time will not allow for a recreation of the wheel or full-blown reiteration of partisan positions every time. But we should expect context and balance in the body of reporting over time.

Finally, what are the prescriptive guidelines for full and fair media coverage of Israeli-Palestinian issues? I believe that they are the basics of reporting any story well: Consider both sides of the story as equally valid and give them balanced representation and voice, not only in direct quotations but also in characterization and analysis. Do not rely on official sources alone – and challenge them when appropriate. Do not perpetuate false comparisons and equivalencies by reporting them unchallenged again and again. And always be aware of relevant context – be it historical or recent – and include it even briefly via a parenthetical phrase or a few paragraphs.

Marda Dunskey

In response to Koffi Annan...

The European Centre for Conflict Prevention (ECCP) has developed a plan to start at three-year integrated programme of research, consultation and discussion around the role of civil society and NGOs in conflict prevention. Following a series of preparatory meetings and regional conferences in 2004, the programme will culminate in an international conference at the UN in 2005.

The official launch of the programme took place in the Netherlands beginning of June. Selected participants from regional and international NGOs together with observers from governments and the UN agencies discussed the structure, process and content of programme. Some 150 key NGOs world-wide have been informed and consulted by ECCP during the pre-phase. Potential initiators in the respective regions i.e. North Africa, West Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, Asia & Pacific,

North America, Central America & Caribbean, South America, Arab World/ Middle East, Western/Northern Europe, Balkans and the Caucasus have been identified. After the launch and planning in June, the initiators are expected to play leading roles in the organisation of the regional conferences.

The initiative has been developed by ECCP in collaboration with member organisations in response to an appeal from the Secretary General of UN, Mr. Koffi Annan, speaking on the prevention of armed conflicts. Annan urged NGOs “with an interest in conflict prevention to organise an international conference of local, national and international NGOs on their role in conflict prevention and future interaction with the United Nations in this field”.

Life and Peace Institute has been involved in the planning and was represented at the meeting in the

Netherlands early June. There is scope for collaboration and mutual interest also in relation to the international consultation and conference “Tools for Peace – the role of religion in conflicts” to be arranged in Sweden in June 2004. The Christian Council of Sweden, Life and Peace Institute, the Central Board of Jewish Communities and the Muslim Council of Sweden are jointly arranging this conference, which is expected to gather some 300 participants from all over the world, representing all world religions.

Read more about the programme on ECCP's website: <http://www.euconflict.org>

For more information regarding the Swedish initiative Tools for Peace, contact Kristina Herngren at the Christian Council of Sweden (Kristina.herngren@skr.org) or Tore Samuelsson (tore.samuelsson@life-peace.org) or Ulla Vinterhav (ulla.vinterhav@life-peace.org) at LPI.

Israel-Palestine:

'Our' victims are tragedy - 'theirs' are statistics

Is there a difference when journalists in Israel and Palestine write about news from the 'own' and the 'other' side, respectively? A recent media study shows how journalistic mechanisms are used by both sides to further the own interests and dehumanise the other part. Thus, media often encourage hostility toward the 'other' part in the conflict, instead of giving an objective description and analysis.

Neither the Israeli nor the Palestinian media show photos of civilians from the 'other side' who have been killed. Journalistic mechanisms are used by both sides to exaggerate, misrepresent, dehumanize, and encourage hostility toward the 'other.' These findings were made by Professor Mohammed Dajani of the Sartawi Center of Al-Quds University and Professor Gadi Wolfsfeld of the Truman Institute of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem during a four months' research how the Israeli and Palestinian media perceived the 'other'.

The findings included commentary by Dr. Hanna Siniora, publisher of The Jerusalem Times, a daily English-language Palestinian paper, and Shmuel Rosner, news director at Ha'aretz, a daily Hebrew-language Israeli paper.

"The use of journalistic mechanisms makes the readers believe that 'our' victims are a tragedy and 'theirs' are statistics, 'our' actions are legitimate and 'theirs' are evil, our aspirations are noble and theirs are despicable", said Professor Wolfsfeld.

The depiction of only one side's tragedy is accomplished by the location and space allotment of the news items and by personal and dramatic

descriptions versus impersonal and analytical descriptions, which dehumanize the 'other.' For example, the killing of a civilian in the conflict would be put on a front page if he were from the 'side' of that media, and on a much later page with less coverage if he were from the 'other' side.

Moreover, newspapers give a sense that "we're all in this together, so that we can identify with the tragedies," said Wolfsfeld. Ethnic and nationalistic solidarity are stimulated by the use of flags in photographs as well as cultural and religious symbols. The names 'Passover Massacre' and 'Al-Aqsa Intifada' help readers identify with those involved.

'The other side' dehumanised

According to Wolfsfeld and Dajani, both Israeli and Palestinian media

dehumanize the 'other' side. This is particularly obvious in the impersonal descriptions of the 'other's' victims. Israeli media avoids giving names, printing photographs, and giving personal details of Palestinian civilian casualties, said Wolfsfeld, but will give the background of assassinated Palestinians involved in attacks against Israel.

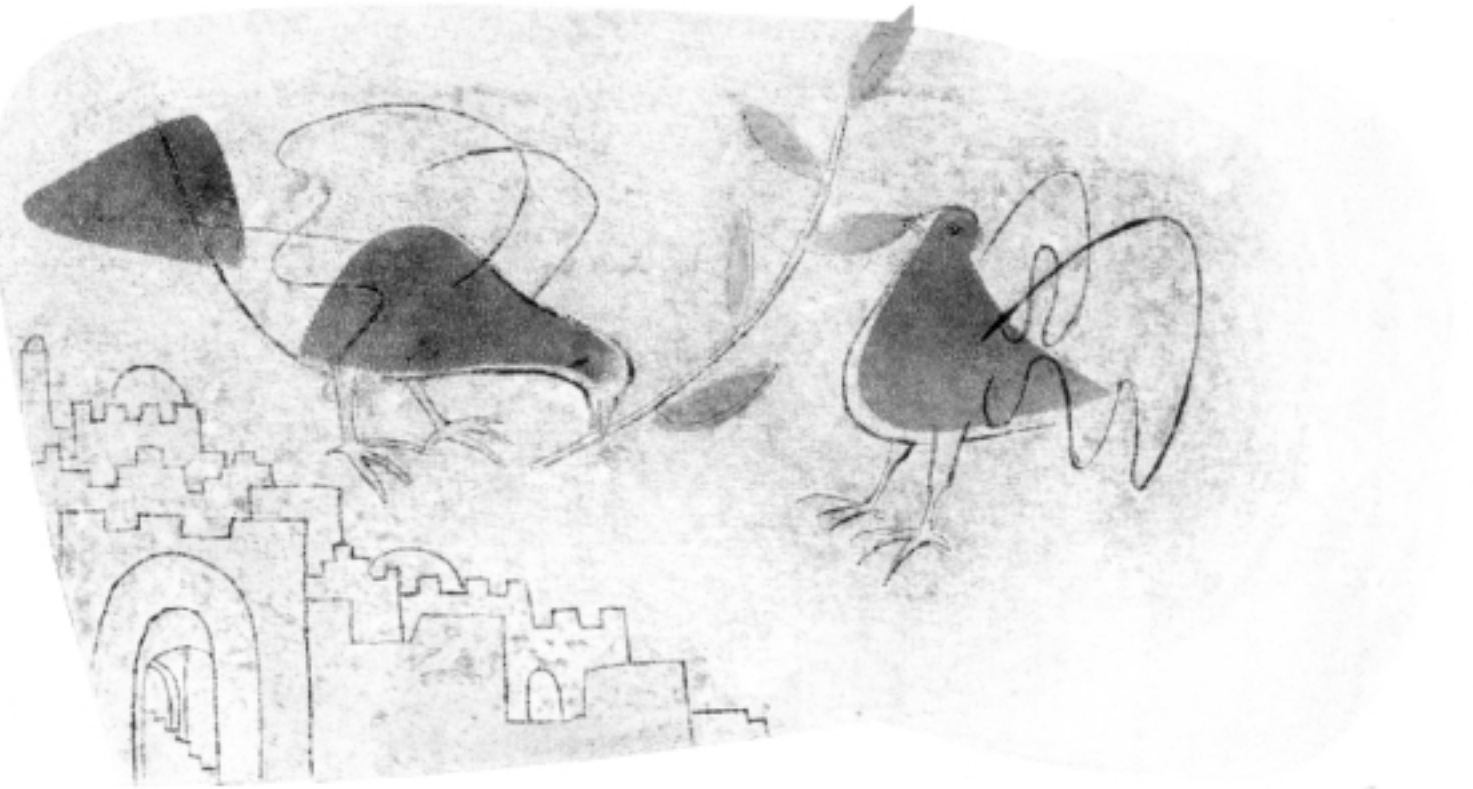
"A targeted strike is put in the context of the person who carried out terrorism, without arguing the point," described Wolfsfeld. "The question is what the media emphasizes or doesn't emphasize. Instead of mentioning the civilians killed, it indicates the act [the terrorist] did."

Similarly, Dajani described how, after Palestinian militants operations against Israel, there are "no photos of the family [of Israeli casualties] or of mourning; just the operation."

Each side tries to legitimize its own actions by telling patriotic stories of those involved and by using military descriptions. Moreover, the use of maps, military operation names (such as "Operation Defensive Shield"), and weapon names, sterilizes the events, according to Wolfsfeld, rather than describing the actual action and its consequences.

Another mechanism to

**"The names
'Passover Massacre'
and
'Al-Aqsa Intifada'
help readers identify
with those involved."**



Still room for peace vision in Israel-Palestine? Can media mobilize public opinion toward peace, or only conflict and war? Illustration: Lika Tov

disenfranchise the other side is through the use of language. The ‘other’ side ‘claimed,’ while the respective media’s side ‘declared’ or ‘stated’. Dajani said the use of vague language also contributes to hostility, as in an example from one Palestinian paper that stated ‘a large number of women and children were killed.’

Although Rosner and Dr. Siniora acknowledged the exaggerations and misrepresentations, they explained why it happens.

“Regarding Jenin there certainly was Palestinian exaggeration,” admitted Siniora, “But Israel prevented coverage,

which is the advantage it has, because any Israeli officer can show a paper and say this is a closed military zone. How can the press tell the facts if it can’t go and see them? So we fell into the trap of being inaccurate.”

“The role of any newspaper is not only as a journalistic tool but also as a tool in creating a sense of community among its readers,” said Rosner. “It has some obligation toward the community it serves and, if the community feels grief, anger and frustration towards the Palestinians, there is no chance the newspaper will not mirror or reinforce these feelings towards the other side.”

Rosner also expressed the fear of losing readers: “We have to consider how far we must go from our readers that they are able to read and still stay with us, and not abandon the newspaper.”

Both professors say there were few examples of news items that showed understanding of the tragedies of the other side, although there were some notable exceptions. In general, both people’s media contribute to mobilizing public opinion toward conflict and war, they said.

Orly Halpern

**“Both Israeli and
Palestinian media
dehumanize
the ‘other’ side.”**

Pax Americana or World Peace?

The members of the Project for the New American Century might aim at American hegemony of the world. In a personal reflection, Hans Romkema points to the risk that the world leaves too many complicated issues to the United States. If this trend is allowed to continue, the author fears that we might be facing even more serious wars than the recent ones.

In 1997 a group of American politicians and analysts created an 'NGO' called *The Project for the New American Century* (PNAC). These people were not happy with the policies of the Clinton administration. In PNAC's founding document it was stated: "*We seem to have forgotten the essential elements of the Reagan Administration's success: a military that is strong and ready to meet both present and future challenges; a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes American principles abroad; and national leadership that accepts the United States' global responsibilities*".

The name of the project and statements such as the above indicate clearly that the members and sympathisers of this organisation are aiming for an American hegemony of the world for a prolonged period. From various documents produced and published by PNAC (see PNAC's website: <http://www.newamericancentury.org>), it is quite obvious that the PNAC members believe that the American century or the "Pax Americana" must be achieved, at least partly, through the use and further development of a superior US army.

According to a report published by PNAC in September 2000 (*Rebuilding America's Defences; Strategy, Forces and Resources For a New Century*),

one of the four aims of the US military is to "*fight and decisively win multiple, simultaneous major theatre wars*". As there are no criteria presented as to who could be the enemies, or examples of scenarios that could lead to the necessity of fighting '*simultaneous major theatre wars*', one tends to conclude that for PNAC, wars are an objective and not a means to achieve political goals.

Why should one take PNAC seriously? Every country has its extremists and radicals, but this case is particular. Some of the most influential people in the Bush administration, Vice-President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz and Cheney's Chief of Staff Lewis Libby, are founding members of PNAC.

One can fear the worst, when people in key positions in the US

so much power that they can go against world opinion, as well as public opinion in their own country and start a war.

Exaggerations?

Before continuing on this track, I propose to sit back for a while and reflect on whether the above is not exaggerated. Saddam Hussein was indisputably a tyrant, and the attack on the Twin Towers was just as real as it was cruel. The Taliban rule was indeed a curse for Afghanistan. On the other hand, despite some flaws, the US people have freedom of expression; there is a functioning justice system (although this does not include Guantanamo Bay), and every four years the American people have the chance to elect a president.

The US army did, in the case of Iraq, indeed help the people to get rid of one of the worst dictators in modern history. When I was employed in Iraqi-Kurdistan from 1993 till 1995, I worked in an area as big as the Netherlands, where the regime flattened all villages and gassed thousands of people in towns like Halabja on the Iranian border and Goptapa in the Gedo Region. My Kurdish colleagues told me that they were initially happy when the Americans intervened in 1992, when Saddam occupied Kuwait. However, this did not last. When the

**The attack on the
Twin Towers was just as
real as it was cruel.**

Government have fighting wars and dominating the world amongst their principle objectives. The Iraqi case has already provided proof that they have

US Army was advancing towards Baghdad, the Kurdish peshmerga, a guerilla group, took advantage and occupied the entire North East of the

country, including the oil-rich city of Kirkuk. Shiite groups did the same in the South. Then the US army report about grave negligence from the US military concerning the protection of nuclear sites in Iraq. Moreover, on

members, are now operating in broad daylight. This forces us to pose several very disturbing questions. Will they leave voluntarily? Will they be able to secure certain elements of their policy to an extent that makes it impossible for future presidents to take a radically different direction? Do they have sufficient grip on American politics and the army to “*fight and decisively win multiple, simultaneous major theatre wars*”?

Other strong players in the international community, like some of the European countries, Russia and China, also have a responsibility. In the case of Iraq, the US was indeed given an opportunity to start a war, as most other countries allowed the Iraqi Government to continue frustrating the disarmament process. It was left to the US, and to a lesser extent Great Britain, to remind the Government, as well as the United Nations, about the disarmament requirements to which Iraq was subject since the first Gulf War.

The world very often seems quite happy to leave complicated dossiers to the Americans. This was, to a large extent at least, the case in former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, in the Israel-Palestine conflict and now again in North Korea. This attitude, in particular from the Europeans, should change. Otherwise the US will be able to continue its current strategy of relying on its military superiority. Here we do not suggest that the European countries, Russia or China should start similar operations as the United States. On the contrary, they should develop a more proactive approach to developing crisis situations that focuses on political, rather than military, solutions.

If no major effort is made to counterbalance the current American approach to complicated political problems, the situation may, at some point in a not too distant future, completely get out of hand and cause a war of a much greater magnitude than the wars in Iraq, Kosovo or Afghanistan.

Hans Romkema

One should not count on the humanitarianism of US army operations.

surprisingly stopped advancing and allowed the Republican Guard to move away from Baghdad and suppress the Kurdish and Shiite revolts. This was already difficult to digest for many Iraqis, but what made it worse was that the Americans observed grave human rights abuses during the counter-attack from the Republican Guard without intervening.

One Kurd told me that an Iraqi army helicopter fired on a large group of Kurdish refugees that fled the attack on Kirkuk. He was one of the survivors and was still astonished by the fact that the much larger US helicopter that was observing the scene did not intervene. The entire world thought that the US and Iraq were still at war, but the US allowed the Republican Guard to fire at innocent civilians, where it would have been easy to stop the senseless killing ...

The above episode shows that one should not count on the humanitarianism of US army operations, despite the claim of freeing the Iraqi people from a ruthless dictator. The US army was sent in 1992 to defend the interests of the United States of America, and there is no reason to believe that this is different in 2003. The Kurds and other Iraqi opposition groups are of course happy that they have received US assistance to finally achieve a regime change in their country. But the Iraqi people, and I bet this includes the Kurdish politicians, are aware that the assistance did not come for free and that at the end of the day only the US interests would count.

This was once again underlined, when, in the first week of May this year, the BBC world-service broadcast a

the BBC internet site, a report was printed about the looting of one of the most important Iraqi nuclear facilities at Al Tuwaitha. The lack of protection of these sites may already have led to the theft of nuclear materials. This shows that even the proliferation of weapons of mass-destruction does not seem a major preoccupation of the United States, despite all its claims to the contrary.

A personal experience in 1994 further supports this thesis. In my office in Sulaymanya, I was approached by a smuggler who came from Government territory and who offered to sell a piece of metal in a tight plastic cover. On the cover was a written message that the metal contained a few percent of uranium and that the supplier was a German firm. I reported this to a US Government official based in Sulaymanya and assured him that if he reacted quickly, I would be able to trace the smuggler through some Kurdish contacts. There was, however, no follow-up of the matter.

Future perspective

The future does not seem too bright, unless there will be a change in US policies. But one can question, with such large interests at stake, whether this will happen any time soon. The US people will continue to be able to elect their presidents and, as such, influence the foreign and internal policies of their country, but even those presidents have to deal with strong powers behind the scenes. The unfortunate situation the world is facing today is that those who usually operated in the shadows, or were dispersed over several services, the PNAC

Argentina: The painful march towards reconciliation

In a project called Reconciliation and the Churches in the Transition to Democracy, the Life & Peace Institute has published a series of studies examining the role of churches in countries where dictatorial rule is giving way to democratic governance. One of these studies is Andiñach, Pablo R & Bruno, Daniel A: *Iglesias evangélicas y derechos humanos en la Argentina* (Evangelical churches and human rights in Argentina). In this article, Anders Ruuth gives a personal reflection and analysis of the difficult but necessary reconciliation process.

Can a book of 160 pages, with a picture of a little red lamp on its black cover, have a chance to be spread in a wider circle? I hope so, because it treats a wound, which is still felt with pain by many people after the many acts of violence during the “dirty” war in Argentina. Is reconciliation possible? The book gives rise to many reflections, some of which are presented here.

Since “la conquista”, Latin America has a tragic history of crimes committed against fundamental human rights, above all against the most critical one: the right to live. Guatemala with its secret courts, civilian troops and death squadrons during the latter part of the 20th century. Or El Salvador with its corrupt military rule, which, among other things, proved “brave” enough to kill six Catholic priests and their house-keeper in the dark night hours of the 16 November 1985, and to shoot Bishop Oscar Romero in his back, while he was celebrating mass on the 24 March 1980. As if it were needed, Argentina’s military in 1973 had a

lesson from General Pinochet in Chile on how to silence the opposition, when Salvador Allende was overthrown.

It is, however, a very important book, which should be studied and reflected on by both individuals and parishes. During the reading I have asked myself many times: How would I have reacted? How much would I have dared to protest against obvious injustices? How would my church, my vicar, my bishop react to kidnappings and disappearances?

The book is well written and documented with many illustrative quotations and a valuable bibliography. Of course, it also leaves many questions unanswered. What I really wish had been described more, are the reactions of individuals and parishes to the disappearances. Were there attempts to keep the names of the disappeared, for example, with photographs or commemorative plaques in parish houses? Argentineans are usually quick with “pergaminos” to notice people. It would have been valuable, but maybe

also frightening, if interviews had been conducted with torturers, to get some insight into their world of thoughts and feelings ...

The book treats its subject in three parts: I. Dictatorship 1976–1983, II. Democracy 1983–1989, and III. Fifteen years later, a new world panorama 1990–1999. It is unavoidable that the period of dictatorship is the most dramatic part of the description, not least because of the cruelty with which the military and the so-called security forces attacked suspected individuals and organisations. The extent of the crimes against human rights during the first epoch is shown in the following numbers: 9 000 people reported disappeared to The National Commission on the Disappeared (*Comisión Nacional sobre Desaparición de Personas, CONADEP*), which was set up after the fall of the military regime. A total of 30 000 people are estimated to be victims of the military dictatorship (p 21).

Before the dictatorship

Even if the coup d’état in 1976 came as a surprise, it was still expected and partly longed for. To restore order after the deeply corrupt and unskilfully lead government under Isabel Perón was by most people seen as necessary. Many, in addition to the military, however, felt called to do this from different perspectives, which gave the military further reason to intervene. There were, for example, the guerilla groups *Los montoneros* and *Ejército Revolucionario Popular*. Another event which stirred violent feelings was the kidnapping and murder of the country’s ex-president, general Aramburu.

This event was enormously publi-



Violent protests in the capital of Buenos Aires. Photo: Pressens Bild

cized and attracted a great deal of attention, not least because a member of the then much discussed movement in Argentina, *Priests of the Third World*¹, was said to be involved in revolutionary activity. After a thorough investigation he was, however, released. In the time before the dictatorship other phenomena were also evident, which glorified the revolution and created martyrs: the death of the Colombian Catholic priest Camilo Torres in a guerilla battle in 1966, and, above all, the death of Che Guevara on 9 October 1967. The papal document about the development of the peoples, *Populorum progressio*, supported the poor but was also conceived as a certain legitimising of the use of violence in a deep crisis for a country.²

During this period some words were specially loaded. “Words like *revolución, cambio, violencia, liberación* were extremely topical, and for many young people the creation of a revolution that was necessary for greater justice probably appeared to be the only truly Christian way.”³ Another document was the journal *Cristianismo y*

Revolución, which was published in 30 “ample issues between September 1966 and September 1971”⁴. Yet another document, which gave the military legal support for measures of a more strategic nature, was the discussion about *Seguridad nacional*, a concept which could be used to justify many measures. The concept was developed in Brazil in the 1950s, in *Doutrina serviço de segurança nacional*, and was one of the foundation-stones for the military regime there up to 1985.⁵

During the dictatorship

When the revolution broke out on 24 March 1973 in the name of *Proceso de Reorganización Nacional* it was to some extent expected. The military junta imprisoned the President and the Government, dissolved the Congress, as well as provincial authorities and the courts of law, and took control over the mass media. At the same time, the arresting of individuals started, with a special focus on intellectuals and often young people, who were suspected members of, or sympathizers with, the guerrilla movement. Soon, the attitude

of the churches towards the military began to show in different statements.

Even if the investigation first and foremost concerns Evangelical churches, many examples are given from the Roman-Catholic church, too. Officially, it took, with several shining exceptions, side with the military. Its attitude to human rights issues was characterized as *tibia*, pale and lukewarm. The following statement by the military bishop Victorio Bonamin is in its compliancy and servility to the generals an almost tragic example:

When blood is shed, there is reconciliation. God reconciles the Argentinean nation through the army (...). It is said that the military are a group of honest people, pure, ready for battle. Yes, to the extent that they have come to Jordan to clean themselves from the blood and take the lead of the country. (p. 23)⁶

It is said about the Evangelical churches that the majority of them, joined in the organisation *Federación Argentina de Iglesias Evangélicas*, with few exceptions had a passive attitude at the start. The reason for this is, according to the authors, not within the scope of their investigation. It is deplorable, because if there is anything one wants to know, it is how churches and their boards reasoned, face to face with perilous and obtrusive violence. Circumstances, however, forced them to increased consciousness of their responsibility. Among other things they formed an advisory body, *Consejo Consultivo de Iglesias*. It was made up of the presidents of the following churches: Iglesia Anglicana, Iglesia Reformada, Iglesia Discípulos de Cristo, Iglesia Luterana Unida, Iglesia [Evangélica] del Río de la Plata, Iglesia Metodista, Iglesia Valdense del Río de la Plata y la Iglesia de Dios. The group appeared to be efficient and could be assembled in a few hours, often in localities belonging to the Evangelical theological faculty, Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos (ISEDET).

A former organisation, *Comisión Argentina para los Refugiados*, which was created to receive refugees from Chile after the coup there, contributed to a certain preparedness and experience to help refugees. Other organisations that were formed were, in 1974, *Servicio de Paz y Justicia* with Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, who later received the Nobel peace prize, in 1975, *Asamblea Permanente de Derechos Humanos*, and in 1976, *Movimiento Ecuaménico por los Derechos Humanos*. During this period, the group of the “Insane mothers”, *las Abuelas*, grew, from a loose and temporary community, to a movement which gives opportunity and courage to protest against the disappearances of daughters and sons. Generals and police had hardly calculated on such a persistent and untiring protest. But mothers who lose their children at last lose the fear of protesting.

Repression grew, not only in Buenos Aires, but also in the interior of the country. The book quotes a number of examples, one of them that 40 persons belonging to Evangelical churches disappeared and were killed, among them the principal of the university in San Luis, Dr Mauricio López. Two Catholic bishops were killed in strange car accidents, two French nuns disappeared, as did thirteen Catholic priests. Bombs exploded in front of churches that displeased the regime. With the “Flight of Death”, victims were made to disappear by being thrown out into the Río de la Plata River, “a practice thought out to eliminate all traces of the fate of thousands of people” (p. 39). But this was, of course, not only to eliminate the traces of these people, but as much to eliminate the traces of the crimes the security forces committed. There is a thorough-paced evil in this practice to conceal the truth. In a report from CONADEP, it is said about the principles for the implementation of the repression, among other things:

Every sign of hesitation within the army and the security forces concer-

ning the methods used for arrests and disappearances was brutally

support the claim that these islands belong the Argentina – and so do all

30 000 people are estimated to be victims of the military dictatorship.

punished. To supply any data whatsoever about arrested or disappeared persons – place, state or fate – was tantamount to death. It was even forbidden within the unit to comment on implemented operations. Every sign of humanity shown to a prisoner was punished with utmost austerity (p. 63).⁷

The coup, thus, caused immeasurable suffering, first and foremost for the victims and their families, but also for many others, in the form of anxiety and suspiciousness. Many people commented on the disappearances with “*Por algo será*”, which means something like: “There must be some reason”. Or as an insensitive pastor in a charismatic church answered a worried mother: “The devil to pay is death.” The insensitivity of some people caused much suffering, as did the feeling of loneliness among people who had nobody to talk to. For many people, a most offensive phenomenon was that the military made use of Christian symbols, like crucifixes and pictures of the Madonna, in the torture-chambers, which could make the torturers imagine that they were committing a deed which pleased God. A highly-ranked military man, Emilio Massera, stated: “Even when we act as a political force, we are still Catholics ... However, as we all work out of love, which is the source of our religion, we have no problems ...” (p. 39).

The political leadership of the military became more and more hollow. To divert the attention from internal problems, the military initiated the unsuccessful war over the islands in the South Atlantic, *Las Malvinas* or *the Falkland Islands*. “Even if”, in the words of ISEDET, “we

Argentineans – we do not think this is the right time to go to war about them.” The defeat also meant an inglorious end for the social engagement of the military. The fall after six years of dictatorship and the beginning of a period of democracy was crowned by a mass demonstration with 300 000 participants at the end of 1982. It had the parole *Marcha por la vida* (March for life) and was organised by the groups for human rights. At the head of the enormous procession were, among others, the “Insane mothers”, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, the Methodist bishop Federico Pagura, and the Catholic bishop Jorge Novak. The demonstration also showed that people were beginning to lose their fear of police and military.

After the dictatorship

Of course, most people felt great joy when the dictatorship had fallen and a democratic constitution had been reintroduced. But now other difficulties followed. For the churches, this meant, among other things, a long and difficult cure of souls to follow up and support families and relatives in their grief, which could now be done more openly and to a greater extent. To this was added the infected discussion about *reconciliation*. When the new government, bravely enough, had arranged trials against the highest military leaders with many convictions, the military, with very concrete threats, forced through laws of amnesty, at which point the question of imperative obedience was decisive.

The reconciliation which the military wanted to reach was, however, more or less to wipe out what had passed and forget it all. Many churches

protested against this understanding. Reconciliation is possible only when crime has been confessed and clarified. The truth must first be put forward. The same thing concerned the *indulto*, remitting of guilt, or grace, which the government and the military strived for, but the answer of the churches was: Grace is possible only when there is confession. From the replies that the authors of the book present from different church communities, Catholic as well as Protestant, it is shown that there was unanimity about this issue.

Others had a sharper view on the issue of remission of sentence. After a number of executed persons had been identified by a group of legal anthropologists, two prosecutors said: "The awfulness [of the crimes] itself makes only the thought of remission of sentence monstrous." (*Su propia atrocidad torna monstruosa la mer hipótesis de la impunidad*. p. 57)

The book also includes interviews with twelve persons about their experiences and memories from the years of dictatorship. Their testimonies are restrained and objective but also upsetting. It is moving to hear a little girl who said that she did not dare to swim in Río de la Plata for fear of coming across some dead person who had been thrown down from the "Flight of Death". It is interesting to observe that the chapel of a Pentecostal community, among the poor, sometimes was a meeting-place, not only for church services but also for birthdays, vigil wakes etc. That gave people a greater sense of community than the loneliness in a private house or the lack of understanding in their own parish.

Among those who were interviewed, I know personally Rodolfo Reinich, chairman in the Lutheran-Reformed Church, which under his leadership also later stood up to defend human rights. The pastor and Th.D. Arturo Blatezky worked, and still works, together with him on this issue. They both had their exam-

from the then Lutheran Theological faculty in José C. Paz outside Buenos Aires.

When the authors present the collected experiences, a first impression is that, in crises like this, shattering tensions easily arise, creating conflicts and a feeling of depression. Another experience is that peaceful, we would say 'normal', protests were met by the military as if they were attacks from guerilla groups. A third experience is the necessity to organize relief actions, to support each other and not stand alone. The book ends by stating that there are still people who do not understand that Christian faith and human feelings sometimes lead to confrontations.

One of the reports from the Ecumenical movement for human rights was called *Nunca mas*, Never again. The cardinal of São Paulo, Brazil, Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, lead a fact-finding commission of victims of torture and torturers during the military dictatorship in Brazil in the 1960's and 1970's, based on secret protocols from military courts. In a publication from this investigation, he writes: "I remember a conclusion by a general, himself an opponent to all torture: He who has once actively exercised torture, will be destroyed by its demoralizing effect. He who exercises torture four or more times, will become so brutalized that he experiences physical and mental enjoyment, to such an extent that he will be able to torture persons even from his own family!"⁸

What happened with the Argentinean reconciliation? It might still be an open question. The little red lamp on the book cover indicates that for some, reconciliation has been possible, whereas for others, the wounds are still painful. Maybe for some, the words of St. John's gospel have become real: "See the Lamb of God, who takes away all sin." *Nunca mas*, never again! It is a pious hope, which can be realized only through vigilance. The ecumenical work plays a very important role here – to investigate crimes to make

reconciliation possible. The book is a testimony about the efforts of many brave people, worth much respect and humility.

Anders Ruuth

Translation: Kristina Lundqvist

¹ In the bibliography I miss *Sacerdotes para el Tercer mundo – crónica, documentos, reflexión*. Buenos Aires 1970. See also Ruuth, A: *The church in Argentine*. Verbum 1976.

² "Everyone knows, however, that revolutionary uprisings – except where there is manifest, longstanding tyranny, which would do great damage to fundamental personal rights and dangerous harm to the common good of the country – engender new injustices, introduce new inequities and bring new disasters. The evil situation that exists, and it surely is evil, may not be dealt with in such a way that an even worse situation results." *Populorum progressio* 1967.

³ Ruuth, p. 32.

⁴ Peralta, Amanda: *Theory and practice in the universe of the poor, an investigation on the history of ideas in Latin American liberation theology*. Daidalos, Göteborg 1995, pp. 56f.

⁵ See, for example, Equipo SELADOC: *Iglesia y seguridad nacional, Sígueme Salmania*, 1980.

⁶ "Cuando hay derramamiento de sangre, hay redención. Dios está redimiendo a través del Ejército a la Nación Argentina (...) Se suele decir que los militares son una falange de gente honesta, pura. Hasta han llegado a purificarse en el Jordán de la sangre para ponerse al frente del país."

⁷ "Todo signo de discrepancia dentro de las FFAA y de Seguridad con los métodos utilizados para la detención y eliminación de personas fue sancionado de modo brutal. Brindar alguna información a los familiares de detenidos-desaparecidos sobre su localización, estado físico o destino era equivalente a la muerte. Estaban prohibidos, incluso, los comentarios entre las propias filas sobre los operativos realizados, sancionándose con el mayor rigor cualquier signo de humanidad que pudiera tenerse con el prisionero." (p. 63)

⁸ "Lembrei-me então da advertência de um general, alias contrário a toda tortura: quem uma vez practica a ação, se trastorna diante do efeito de desmoralização infligida. Quem repete a tortura quatro ou mais vezes se bestializa, sente prazer físico e psíquico tamanho que é capaz de torturar até as pessoas mais delicadas da própria família!" In "Brasil – nunca mais", p. 13.

From Life and Work to Life and Peace

Twenty years ago a Christian world conference on Life and Peace took place in Uppsala, Sweden. The present Life and Peace Institute can be seen as a direct follow up of this conference. From the first thought to the magnificent inaugural service in the mighty Cathedral of Uppsala lay more than two years of preparatory work. In this article Björn Ryman outlines some sketches from a broader study of the inception of the Institute.

Without Archbishop Olof Sundby of Uppsala, the Life and Peace Conference in April 1983 would never have taken place. True, many conferences for peace were held when the escalation of nuclear weapons reached its height, but none like the one which happened in Uppsala. In a brief sketch of its historical roots, I will try to paint a picture of the ideas which were behind the conference. Why was it held at this particular time? Who were the actors? Why did not the Pope and other church leaders come? Was the emphasis on the political agenda for peace or on the Biblical agenda for shalom?

Archbishop Olof Sundby took the lead in quite radical issues for peace and justice. After the 1968 WCC assembly in Uppsala the issues of social justice were high on the agenda. The upheaval of the 1968 revolution turned many familiar church traditions upside down. "The world sets the agenda", was a phrase adopted by Olof Sundby. He tuned his traditional ears to the new language he heard. He listened particularly to the church leaders from the South and their plea for justice. He took into his heart the cries of the starving people of Africa, appallingly portrayed in the Sahel emergency in 1973 and the political upheaval in Ethiopia in its wake.

The second cold war started around 1980. Cruising missiles were to be installed in western Europe. The Soviet Union enlarged its big armaments of both conventional and nuclear weapons. The arms race was to reach proportions never before experienced. The leader of the Soviet Union, Leonid Brezhnev, was visibly ailing and as such in the hands of the generals. In the United States Jimmy Carter was replaced by Ronald Reagan as President. Jimmy Carter had tried to make peace in several places and succeeded in the peace agreement of 1978 between Israel and Egypt. His policy was to try and stop the arms race through the SALT agreements.

President Reagan received public endorsement for a policy of confrontation with the Soviet Union including heavy rearmament and launching of star wars. This policy was supported by Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. The platform on which she was elected was the same as that of president Reagan on economic and defense issues. A new aggressive policy had taken a fast hold. Compared to the détente of the 1970's the world had moved into a new paradigm. Both the nuclear arms proliferation and

conventional arms made the world an unsafe place.

Conference for church leaders

In this scenario many conferences were arranged on the issues of war and peace. The idea of a conference for church leaders dealing exclusively with the threat of a nuclear war came up before the start of 1981. In June 1982 a Special Session for Disarmament was to be convened by the United Nations. From the beginning, the thought was to influence this session through assembling a real Pan-Christian meeting in Sweden. For this purpose the Pope and the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Moscow, as well as the Archbishop of Canterbury, should not only attend, but also issue the invitations to the conference. None of this materialized. None of them came, but they all supported the conference and sent adequate delegations.

Olof Sundby wanted the conference to follow in the footsteps of Nathan Söderblom, who was Archbishop of Uppsala 1914-1931. In 1925 he called the churches together to a historical ecumenical meeting. In one sense it was the start of the modern ecumenical movement. To Nathan Söderblom, a true European, the outbreak of the First World War, was a setback. He served as a visiting professor to Leipzig in Germany in 1914, just as the war dogs started barking. He had also served as a pastor in Paris in the 1890's and taken his doctorate of theology in Paris. The Anglican Church with its stress on Apostolic succession of bishops and clergy and its rich liturgy had appealed to him.

The fact that these three European countries with strong Christian traditions went to war with each other



Ambassador Olle Dahlén welcomes the first Director of the Life and Peace Institute, Roger Williamson. Photo: Jim Elfström/LPI

was a severe blow to Nathan Söderblom. As early as at the beginning of the war, he pursued the idea of calling church leaders from Europe together to a peace conference. This failed. Not until after the war did Söderblom try again to engage the churches for a peace conference. He succeeded in 1925, and most of the deliberations were held in Stockholm. The final service was held in the Cathedral of Uppsala, but the see of the Archbishop did not have enough facilities at the time to hold such an international conference. The continuation of the meeting was called Life and Work.

Both Olof Sundby and the Swedish politicians involved saw the conference they planned in the light of Nathan Söderblom. His prayer for peace was used by Olof Sundby. Still this should not be an ordinary ecumenical conference for professionals within the ecumenical movement. It should be extraordinary in the sense that church leaders on the highest hierarchical level should invite around 150 other church leaders. Although Olof Sundby himself visited Pope John Paul II in Rome, the Pope could not make it to Sweden. No pope in office had ever visited Sweden. The Vatican, however, gave a positive response to the conference and promised to support it. Two months later the Pope was almost killed by a gunman. The original idea for the

conference of top church leaders had failed, but the idea had been welcomed by many, including the Pope.

Ecumenical experience

Around him Archbishop Olof Sundby had gathered a few Swedes as an advisory committee. They included his colleague and friend, Bishop Martin Lönnebo, the original initiator of the conference, MP Evert Svensson, the Minister for Education, Jan-Erik Wikström, and former ambassador and MP, Olle Dahlén. They all had long experience with the ecumenical movement both nationally and internationally. Olof Sundby was Vice-President of the WCC and had participated in the highest body of the LWF. Olle Dahlén was chairperson of the Churches Commission on International Affairs. He had also served as an ambassador of the Government to have special contacts with NGOs both in Sweden and abroad, including most of the ecumenical organizations. His network was vast and he had been professionally involved at many crises, for instance in Sudan. Olle Dahlén was to work full time for the preparation of the conference and afterwards to establish the Life and Peace Institute. He traveled extensively around the world to invite people and seek support.

Olof Sundby proposed that an invitation should be signed by the

Archbishops of Sweden and Finland and the primates of Oslo and Copenhagen. Four ecumenical representatives from Scandinavia, representing different denominations should also be among the inviters.

Olof Sundby acted as chief of staff to get things organized for the conference. He called up two young theologians from the University of Uppsala to participate with their special skills. They made two drafts of papers to state the purpose of the Conference. One of the drafts had as its headline Life and Peace. The paper starts: "The mind of the spirit is life and peace (Romans 8:6). Jesus Christ came that we may have life and peace (John 10:10 and 14:27)." The organizing committee decided that the Conference and all that it entailed would be called Life and Peace. This was approximately one year before it was to happen.

The six-page memorandum closes with a prayer of peace by Nathan Söderblom, probably used 58 years earlier at the 1925 Ecumenical meeting. That meeting had ended in a decision to start Life and Work. To Olof Sundby, it had been clear from the beginning that the intention of the 1983 conference was the same as the 1925 conference. This is inscribed in the first and last words of the document: Life and Peace – Prayer of Peace by Nathan Söderblom.

The Life and Peace Christian World Conference started in the Cathedral of Uppsala, where Cardinal Paolo Evaristo Arns of Sao Paolo preached. Much of the conference was spent in the Cathedral and in Bible studies. Archbishop Sundby said that it was a calling, triggered by the conviction of conscience to arrange this conference, guided by the Holy Spirit. The conference succeeded in many things, among them in gathering many leaders of different churches and denominations, maybe one of the richest in diversity. One of their proposals for peace education was to initiate the Life and Peace Institute.

Björn Ryman

Pour une paix durable en RDC: Le point de vue de la population

A l'heure des Accords de paix et de la mise en place du gouvernement d'union nationale, nous avons voulu savoir comment les populations s'inscrivent dans le processus de paix en cours. Cet article va s'intéresser à traduire, à la lumière des réalités locales, trois grands thèmes que les populations enquêtées ont identifiés comme indispensables pour l'instauration d'une paix durable: le rapatriement des militaires et des réfugiés Hutu rwandais, la formation de l'armée nationale et l'unification du pays.

Le contenu de cet article est basé sur les résultats de trois mois d'enquêtes sur le territoire de Bunyakiri.¹ Ces enquêtes menées conjointement par l'Institut Vie et Paix et la PADEBU (Plate-forme d'Associations de Développement de Bunyakiri) ont touché une quarantaine de localités où nous avons conduit des entretiens collectifs avec des femmes, des jeunes, des hommes, des organisations locales, des églises et des autorités coutumières, et de façon informelle avec les militaires.

Le territoire de Bunyakiri, peuplé en majorité par l'ethnie Tembo, est situé à 80 km de Bukavu. Il est considéré comme un haut-lieu de la résistance Mayi-Mayi (mouvement nationaliste de résistance). Depuis le retrait de l'Armée Patriotique Rwandaise (APR, aujourd'hui RDF) en octobre 2002, il était entièrement contrôlé par le groupe Mayi-Mayi placé sous le commandement du Général Padiri.

Depuis le 5 mai dernier, le territoire de Bunyakiri connaît de nouveaux affrontements opposant les forces du Rassemblement Congolais pour la

Démocratie (RCD) aux Mayi-Mayi. Cette nouvelle évolution a d'ores déjà entraîné d'importants déplacements de populations et nous craignons la recrudescence des exactions à leur endroit.

Priorité rapatriement

Pour les populations de Bunyakiri, depuis le retrait de l'APR et l'arrêt des affrontements, le rapatriement des réfugiés et des milices Hutu rwandais est cité comme la priorité pour une paix durable au niveau local. Les populations dénoncent l'insécurité liée à l'utilisation par les groupes armés de la prédation (pillage, viol, torture, meurtre) comme moyen de subsistance.

Pour les populations autochtones, civils et militaires doivent indifféremment rentrer au Rwanda. « Nous ne savons pas distinguer les militaires des civils: un jour ils sont civils et le lendemain ils portent l'arme. »²

Avec le retrait de l'APR, le Général Padiri s'est exprimé pour le rapatriement volontaire des militaires Hutu rwandais sous son commandement, l'alliance des Mayi-Mayi avec les forces

démocratiques pour la libération du Rwanda (FDLR, ex-ALIR) ayant été motivée par la lutte contre l'ennemi commun, l'APR. Notre enquête a montré que cette volonté de rompre l'alliance avec les forces FDLR est largement partagée par les Mayi-Mayi.

Les organisations locales, comme Synergie Vie³, ont elles aussi entrepris des actions de sensibilisation pour encourager le rapatriement volontaire des civils et des militaires Hutu rwandais.

Les civils et les militaires Hutu rwandais sont présents sur le territoire de Bunyakiri depuis 1997, ce séjour prolongé ayant eu pour conséquence le développement de logiques d'installation à long-terme.

Dans la plupart des cas, les réfugiés et les militaires Hutu rwandais se sont installés dans les forêts, en marge de la population locale. Près de la localité de Nyamirwa, les réfugiés Hutu ont installé leur village avec leurs propres infrastructures (école, centre de santé) et leur pouvoir coutumier. Ils entretiennent des relations occasionnelles avec les populations locales: les réfugiés sont utilisés comme main d'œuvre par les locaux, fréquentent le marché et les offices religieux.

L'alliance entre les Mayi-Mayi et les groupes FDLR a dans certains cas favorisé l'intégration de ces populations au sein des communautés locales. La localité de Cinéné était le quartier général du groupe Mayi-Mayi de Padiri de 1997 à 2001. L'alliance militaire qui existait entre les Mayi-Mayi et les forces FDLR a permis l'installation des militaires et avec eux des réfugiés Hutu rwandais. Dans cette localité, les populations autochtones et les réfugiés vivent ensemble. Trois des quatre enseignants que compte l'école de Cinéné sont des réfugiés Hutu. Les

enfants congolais et rwandais étudient ensemble et des mariages ont été conclus entre des congolais et des rwandais.

Du côté des Mayi-Mayi, malgré la volonté du Général Padiri de se désolidariser des FDLR, des obstacles subsistent. La collaboration avec les FDLR permet aux Mayi-Mayi d'assurer un certain contrôle sur ces groupes. Dans la chefferie de Kalonge, les autorités militaires Mayi-Mayi et les coutumiers ont mis en place un système de prélèvement de rations alimentaires destinées aux FDLR afin d'éviter le pillage des populations.

Un deuxième argument doit être pris en compte. Les militaires Hutu ont pour beaucoup reçu une formation militaire professionnelle. Cette compétence militaire ainsi que leur détermination au front représentent un atout non-négligeable pour les Mayi-Mayi. Un enfant-soldat nous a confié que « lors des affrontements, ce sont les Hutu qui sont en première ligne et manipulent les armes lourdes. »

La reprise des hostilités risque de renforcer chez les Mayi-Mayi l'idée qu'ils ne devraient pas se séparer des militaires FDLR.

Formation de l'armée nationale

Le processus de formation de l'armée nationale devra tout d'abord s'atteler à identifier les futures recrues de l'armée nationale et à démobiliser et désarmer les autres. Dans ce processus, la prise en charge des enfants-soldats s'impose comme une priorité.

Le mouvement Mayi-Mayi est caractérisé par un nombre important d'enfants-soldats, certains n'atteignent pas l'âge de 7 ans. Beaucoup de ces enfants ont rejoint les Mayi-Mayi pour échapper à la pauvreté et au désœuvrement, certains autres ont été recrutés de force ou encore appelés par un membre de leur famille. La présence de ces enfants dans l'armée est largement condamnée par les populations qui souhaitent leur démobilisation et leur prise en charge. « Il faut démobiliser ces enfants car ils sont impolis et insolents. Ils n'ont pas

de formation morale et manque de maturité intellectuelle. »⁴ « Pour ces enfants, tuer c'est un jeu. Ils ne savent pas distinguer le bien du mal. »⁵

Des organisations locales et internationales ont déjà mené des actions pour démobiliser et réintégrer ces enfants mais ce processus se heurte à l'hostilité des Mayi-Mayi. Une organisation locale, Initiative Pour la Paix (IPP) déplore le fait que nombre des enfants qui avaient été démobilisés ont été sanctionnés comme déserteurs et forcés de réintégrer le mouvement. Il est difficile d'imaginer que tant qu'il y aura des affrontements, les autorités Mayi-Mayi acceptent la démobilisation.

Concernant les adultes, les populations appuient l'idée que chacun, individuellement, devra prendre la décision de quitter ou de rejoindre l'armée, mais relèvent le fait que beaucoup ont déjà acquis un esprit militaire. Un jeune militaire nous disait que lui ne pouvait plus rejoindre la vie civile car il n'avait plus que la guerre en tête. L'intégration dans l'armée nationale, c'est aussi la perspective d'être enfin reconnu par le gouvernement. « Beaucoup de militaires sont très contents à l'idée de rejoindre l'armée nationale. Ils se sont beaucoup battus pour être reconnus par le gouvernement. »⁶

Au-delà du processus de démobilisation et de formation de l'armée nationale, il est nécessaire de réfléchir à un processus de « désarmement » de la société. Huit années de guerre ont contribué à l'imposition d'une logique de violence (« c'est l'arme qui fait la loi ») au détriment des structures d'autorité traditionnelles (les coutumiers, les administratifs, les enseignants, la famille).

Cette nouvelle logique s'est particulièrement imposée chez les jeunes et les enfants. L'arme est entrée dans la culture des enfants. Certains enfants peuvent au bruit d'un tir reconnaître l'arme.

Les déplacements de population et la pauvreté liés au conflit ont obligé chacun à s'assumer seul. Les parents, ne pouvant plus répondre aux besoins de leurs enfants, ont perdu leur autorité. Contre l'avis de leurs parents, de

nombreux jeunes ont choisi de rejoindre l'armée, ou encore pour les filles, d'aller vivre avec un militaire.

Unité nationale et réconciliation

La constitution de la transition, promulguée le 4 avril 2003 par le Président de la République définit les principes de la mise en place d'un gouvernement d'unité nationale rétablissant l'autorité de l'Etat sur l'ensemble du territoire national.

Les revendications nationales, notamment la réunification du pays, s'affirment très fortement dans le discours des populations. Ces revendications répondent en écho au discours véhiculé par les Mayi-Mayi, soit la lutte contre l'occupation étrangère. « Tous les Congolais qui sauvegardent le territoire congolais sont Mayi-Mayi. »⁷

Comme le discours des Mayi-Mayi, le nationalisme défendu par les populations offre peu de perspectives politiques et s'enferme dans une logique de résistance et d'opposition. Les populations réclament l'unité du pays mais le processus politique conduisant à la formation du gouvernement de transition nationale semble leur échapper. Les populations attendent des signes tangibles d'unité, et l'unité du pays cela veut d'abord dire l'arrêt des affrontements et la liberté de circulation.

Derrière cette visée nationaliste, le mouvement Mayi-Mayi conserve une dimension locale. La population reconnaît le mouvement comme une émanation locale (« Ce sont nos enfants ») qui s'est affirmé pour défendre la population (« sans eux, les Tutsi nous auraient tous exterminés »). Leur demande de reconnaissance des combattants Mayi-Mayi, c'est aussi une demande de reconnaissance de l'effort de la communauté. En l'absence d'un soutien extérieur, ce sont les populations qui ont cotisé pour assurer la ration alimentaire des Mayi-Mayi.

Plus largement, les populations affirment que le mouvement Mayi-Mayi a contribué à renforcer la reconnaissance des Batembo par les

autres communautés (bien que la création d'un territoire Tembo autonome ait été officialisé par les autorités du RCD le 09/09/1999) . « Avant les Batembos étaient toujours derrière une autre ethnies : à Bunyakiri ils étaient derrière les Havu, à Masisi derrière les Hunde et à Walikale derrière les Nyanga. Aujourd'hui, les Tembo ont une identité propre.»⁸

L'unification du pays ne pourra passer

outre ces réalités locales. La guerre a particulièrement affecté les milieux enclavés, comme le territoire de Bunyakiri, où un grand nombre de mouvements armés a trouvé refuge. Aujourd'hui, ce que ces populations demandent avant tout, c'est la prise en considération de la voix et de la souffrance de leur communauté et l'appui aux actions de développement dans leur milieu.

Hélène Morvan

¹ L'ensemble des résultats de cette enquête paraîtront dans un article en septembre 2003.

² Entretien avec les populations de Lailai, le 12/04/2003.

³ Rapport disponible sur le site de l'Institut Vie et Paix.

⁴ Entretien avec les représentants de la chefferie de Hombo-Sud, le 04/04/2003.

⁵ Entretien avec le prêtre catholique de Kalonge, le 26/03/2003.

⁶ Entretien avec le Comité de sécurité civile de Bunyakiri, le 30/04/2003.

⁷ Séminaire de sensibilisation organisé par les Mayi-Mayi pour les populations de Bunyakiri, le 19/04/2003.

⁸ Entretien avec un originaire de Wola-Luanda à Goma, le 15/03/2003.

Summary in English

This article is based on the results of three months of fieldwork done in the Bunyakiri territory (South Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo) by Hélène Morvan, who works as a research assistant at the Life & Peace Institute's office in Bukavu. This paper deals with three major themes that the local population identified as being key issues for a future sustainable peace in Congo:

- Repatriation of the refugees and of the Rwandan Hutu militaries.

Rwandan Hutu civilians as well as militaries have been present in this area since 1997. Even though the forced alliance between the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR, ex ALIR) and the Mayi-Mayi in some cases might have favoured the integration of these groups within local communities, both the population and the Mayi-Mayi leadership have expressed

their wish to see them repatriated. Some obstacles, however, still persist, especially as the Mayi-Mayi largely benefit from the competences of the Hutu militaries.

- Demobilisation and training of the national army.

Two key issues have to be addressed here. The first one concerns the demobilisation and the reintegration into civilian life of child soldiers who have been massively enlisted in the Mayi-Mayi troops. Some international and local organisations have already embarked on this process, facing some hostility from the Mayi-Mayi who hardly want to be deprived of their numerous young soldiers, especially in a time of renewed violence. The second issue deals with the necessary disarmament of the Congolese society, where carrying a weapon is synonymous with making the law to the detriment of the traditional structures of authority.

• National unity and reconciliation
The reunification of the country is the fondest wish of the population. However, in spite of the Mayi-Mayi rhetoric, this nationalism is locking itself into resistance and opposition. Moreover, the people call for the reunification of Congo, but the political process for the creation of a transitional government of national unity is totally beyond their control.

The future reunification of the country will have to take into account these local realities. The protracted armed conflict has particularly affected landlocked regions, such as the Bunyakiri territory, where many armed groups have found refuge. What the population is asking now is some consideration of its suffering and support to development efforts in their communities.

Somalia: Ten years and many lessons learned

A new book published by the Life & Peace Institute, called *Communitybased Bottom-up Peacebuilding*, by Thania Paffenholz has as its aim the analysis of the peacebuilding approach of LPI within the Somali context during the period 1990-2000. From these experiences, a number of lessons were learned for the practise and theory of peacebuilding that contribute to the further development of civil society and grassroots implementation.

The book is included in LPI's *Horn of Africa Series*, which documents diverse aspects of the work of the Horn of Africa

Programme. The focus is on action research, covering a range of activities in the region, in particular support for community-based peacebuilding programmes.

The author, Thania Paffenholz, gives some glimpses from the research behind the book.

The background to the research project is that when I was working together with LPI in Somalia, we often had discussions about the role of LPI. I realised that the constant challenge of working under difficult circumstances in Somalia put so much pressure on



Thania Paffenholz, researcher behind the Somalia report.

handling the operational side of the programme that there was not sufficient time to reflect deeply about the work. On the one hand LPI held important reflection meetings from time to time, that always brought important changes and adaptations to the programme. On the other hand, I had the feeling that the important experiences of LPI in Somalia needed to be more researched and made available for the interested community of researchers and practitioners.

To undertake this was a tremendous learning experience! First of all it was a fascinating research project. From the beginning in the early 1990s, LPI's work in Somalia had many elements that are now acknowledged by most peacebuilding researchers and practitioners to be of strategic importance for supporting sustainable peacebuilding, such as long-term engagement, the focus on empowering internal actors from within the conflict country and the strong focus on advocacy for people-based peacebuilding.

This was at a time when the discussion about peacebuilding and conflict transformation had not even fully started. Therefore, it was so interesting to study the experiences of LPI in Somalia systematically. As we can see now, LPI has developed its own approach, which may be seen as a

specific approach among the peacebuilding and conflict transformation approaches. Moreover, the many lessons that came out of LPI's work in Somalia can now be used for peacebuilding in other countries by organisations that are working for the empowerment of people in conflict countries.

Secondly, it was an important personal experience, as it gave me the opportunity to reflect on a part of my own experiences of my work in Somalia, which was an important learning experience as well.

In summary, the experiences of the LPI involvement in Somalia are the following: LPI stayed on in the country when almost every other organisation had left in the mid 1990's. The long-term engagement in Somalia gave LPI the possibility of testing a variety of different strategies to support building peace in Somalia. The main general lessons can be summarized as follows:

- The strong vision and belief in people-based peacebuilding was the driving force behind all activities that enabled LPI to overcome difficult stages in the peace process.
- A clear understanding of roles is essential for peacebuilders: LPI always sees itself as a facilitator to serve the interests of people.

- There is a need for ongoing good analysis and concrete implementation strategies in combination with flexibility and openness.
- Finding the right partners, including donors, is important.
- Building structures for peacebuilding and thinking in processes rather than in a series of single events are important ingredients for peacebuilding.
- The need for long-term commitment is crucial!
- Built-in learning processes are needed, as well as making the process sustainable from the beginning.

One of the most important findings from LPI's Somalia experience is the following: LPI demonstrated that empowerment of civil society is possible, even in the absence of organised civil society groups. This finding is of particular importance, both for research and the practice of peacebuilding, as the whole concept of empowerment builds on groups that can be empowered. Thus, LPI's concept of how to do empowerment without these groups can now be further developed and used for other processes.

Thania Paffenholz

Excerpt from *Community-based Bottom-up Peacebuilding by Thania Paffenholz*

Timing: The need for long-term engagement and "windows of opportunities"

The right timing of interventions is a subject that takes up a great deal of discussion in the literature on conflict transformation and peacebuilding. For many years there has been a debate about the ripeness of conflicts for resolution and the need to time peace interventions according to this ripeness. Zartman and others analysed that a peace intervention can contribute to solving a conflict, only if a conflict is ripe for resolution.

The concept of ripeness has

provoked a debate in research, coming to the conclusion that the concept is helpful, as it makes actors more sensitive to these indicators.

However, the practical use of the concept is limited, as ripeness can usually only be analysed ex post, or is empirically very difficult to distinguish from the success of outcomes. It becomes thereby tautological: If the conflict is not ripe, there is no chance for successful peace interventions – if peace interventions succeed, the conflict was ripe.

Moreover, in focussing too much on the concept of ripeness, there is even a

danger that external actors remain inactive, as they do not see a ripe moment.

With the evolution of transformation and process-oriented approaches to peacebuilding, the concept of ripeness is not seen to be of such importance any more. The focus is now more on long-term engagement in order to establish relationships and structures for peacebuilding over time. In consequence, it is necessary on all levels of interventions to think in longer time frames, as only many different interventions at various times of the entire process will lead to successful conflict transformation.

LPI News

Eritrea: Peacebuilding for religious leaders

- There is a real hunger for this. People have been at war for so many years. They have had enough of bloodshed and want to see development and a peaceful society.

Florence Odeur, Training coordinator at the LPI Horn of Africa Programme, is enthusiastic about the two workshops held in recent months for religious leaders from all over Eritrea.

The first workshop in November 2002 gathered 40 participants from the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and the Evangelical Church of Eritrea. The group included men and women, pastors as well as lay leaders. In addition, a special one-day workshop for youth was arranged. The original plan was to hold a joint workshop with leaders from the Muslim community, but due to the Ramadan the Muslims could not attend. That group of 25 representatives therefore met in March this year for a parallel workshop.

- It was the first time Muslim leaders met for this kind of a basic peacebuilding workshop, says Johan Svensson, LPI Horn of Africa Programme Representative. In the follow-up three weeks long Training of Trainers in May, the participants were from both the Christian and the Muslim communities.

The training was carried out in collaboration with Norwegian Church Aid's Eritrea Programme, and the project is part of the LPI Horn of Africa Framework Programme. Other similar initiatives are planned for Sudan and Ethiopia.

- It is a remarkable contrast to the simultaneous developments around Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East, says Johan Svensson. While tensions between Christians and Muslims are building up there, we find ways of joint peacebuilding in Eritrea. No

doubt religious leaders will play a major role also in the future peace process of Ethiopia-Eritrea.

At this point, however, the aim is to strengthen local leadership and enable leaders and potential trainers to bring the message back to their respective local communities. It is a matter of both conflict transformation and prevention.

- It is important to build on the relative harmony between Christians and Muslims, says Florence Odeur. In the training, we are looking at the many different traditional ways of solving conflicts in different parts of Eritrea, and we bring in new, additional knowledge and experiences. The attitude from the participants is not "we know it all"; rather there is genuine interest in learning. I am astonished by the hunger to learn and exchange experiences.

One of the tasks in the peacebuilding workshops is to identify causes of conflict, and to suggest specific solutions.



*Training Coordinator Florence Odeur at the peacebuilding workshop in Asmara.
Photo: Johan Svensson*



Participants came from all over Eritrea. Photo: Johan Svensson

In the discussions, a “bridge” of peace with a need for pillars is created. Among the pillars mentioned in the workshops are fair distribution of jobs, security for all people, freedom of religion, communication infrastructure, democratic practice, a good constitution, good neighbours, education, equality, justice and harmony between Christians and Muslims.

Among the international collaborators and financial contributors to the project are currently Sida, Church of Sweden and Norwegian Church Aid.

Seminar 20 years after

In April 2003, exactly 20 years after the original Life and Peace Conference, LPI Uppsala arranged a special seminar with participants from Uppsala University, Swedish Mission Council and Swedish Missions Research Institute, staff and board members of the Institute itself. Speaker was Dr. Andrew Kirk from Birmingham and the theme was Religion, conflicts and globalisation.

- Apart from the date, I see very

little parallel between the world today and the situation 20 years ago, when Archbishop Olof Sundby and Ambassador Olle Dahlén invited church leaders from all over the world to discuss the nuclear threat and the cold war, suggested Andrew Kirk, and continued to explore how religion is used in positive and negative senses.

Religion may be a main cause, an indirect cause and a contributing factor to violence, conflicts and war. On the other hand, religion may be a means of resolving conflicts through theoretical analysis of the causes, by bringing in a vision or by insisting on justice. Andrew Kirk also proposed that the pastoral capacity of religions could be used to promote diversity, pluralism and tolerance, but there is need to learn how to practice concepts like forgiveness and reconciliation.

The topic of religion in relation to conflicts is very central in the current work of LPI, and the theme of the upcoming consultation in Uppsala 8-12 October is Tools for

Peace? – the Role of Religion in Conflicts. In June 2004, a major international, inter-faith peace conference on the same theme will be arranged in Sweden. For more information regarding this, contact LPI, Ulla Vinterhav (ulla.vinterhav@life-peace.org), or Christian Council of Sweden, Kristina Herngren (kristina.herngren@skr.org). If you want to get in touch with Andrew Kirk regarding his seminar, drop an e-mail to him on andrew@kirks.org.uk

Flashback on 2002

In the annual report of work in 2002, it can be noted that LPI initiated a peacebuilding programme together with churches and other local partners in the Kivu provinces of Congo Kinshasa. The programme is supported financially by governmental development agencies in UK, The Netherlands and Sweden. Similar work in Congo Brazzaville continued, with support from Sida, Sweden, and UNESCO.

In the Horn of Africa Programme, a restructuring towards a more regional framework took place. The longstanding commitment to training and capacity building in Somalia turned into a partnership relation with the Somali NGO, Forum for Peace and Governance, which receives support from Sida through LPI.

A couple of specific research projects, one about the role of churches in countries in transition to democracy, and another on militarization and economic penetration in the Pacifics, were completed. LPI staff also participated in a number of consultations, workshops and seminars. Preparations for a joint Masters course in “Religion and Violence” with Uppsala University was initiated.

The total financial turn over at the Institute, including the field programmes, was 20 million SEK.



The LPI Horn of Africa Programme has carried out a three week long Training of Trainers for selected leaders from Southern Sudan. The training, held at Embagathi, outside Nairobi, Kenya, gathered some 30 participants. Among the organizers and teachers were Florence Odeur, Johan Svensson and Basil BS Nyama from LPI. Photo: HAP

Minority rights in a future Iraq

For decades, the people of Iraq have lived with the very opposite to democracy. Gross violations of human rights have been targeted at specific ethnic and religious groups. The combined effects of economic sanctions and wars left the population impoverished and highly dependent on the state for their basic needs.

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein's totalitarian regime in April this year, a transition period is taking place in Iraq, the outcome of which is still uncertain to all parties involved. Before these events occurred, a report named *Building Democracy in Iraq* was published by the Minority Rights Group International. The authors behind the report are Yash Ghai, Mark Latimer and Yahia Said. The report is partly based on interviews with Max van der Stoep, Gudmundur Alfredsson, Asma Jahangir and Donald Horowitz.

The report presents a detailed analysis of the options for a constitutional process and the establishment of inclusive democracy in a post-totalitarian Iraq. It considers the need to entrench the features that are essential to a genuinely democratic society. In particular it analyses the risk posed by inter-ethnic and inter-confessional conflict and the action necessary to try and avoid it. On the one hand, Iraq has a recent history of systematic discrimination and violent repression targeted at particular ethnic and religious groups. On the other, it has traditionally been a relatively well-integrated society. If not properly informed, major political change and international intervention pursued in Iraq, may together risk exacerbating the potential for division.

The report considers, in turn, the specific challenges for establishing a multi-ethnic, multi-confessional democracy in Iraq, the social and political aspects of managing post-totalitarian transition, and options for a constitution-building process, drawing on the experience of other states in transition.

At the end of the report, the Minority Rights Group gives seven recommendations, the so called Ground rules for building democracy in Iraq. Relevant international instruments are also presented, from the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Minorities, and the Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights.

The report also includes a number of well-arranged boxes with useful facts and background material.

To order the report, or for further information, contact the Minority Rights Group International (minorityrights@mrgmail.org), or visit the website: www.minorityrights.org

Kristina Lundqvist

Making targeted sanctions effective

Targeted sanctions have been the subject of an international diplomatic and academic process, which was initiated by Switzerland,

focusing on financial sanctions, the Interlaken Process. This was followed by the initiative of Germany, the Bonn-Berlin Process, dealing with arms embargoes, aviation sanctions and travel bans. These processes brought together experts, academic researchers, diplomats, practitioners and non-governmental organisations.

After the two volumes presented to the UN late 2001, a third process, the Stockholm Process, was initiated. The aim was to concentrate on the implementation of targeted sanctions; there must be effective actions between words and wars.

The final report, *Making Targeted Sanctions Effective: Guidelines for the Implementation of UN Policy Options*, was presented to the Security Council in March 2003. The result is summarized under ten headings:

1. Design sanctions resolutions with implementation in mind
2. Maintain international support for the sanctions regime
3. Monitor, follow-up and improve the measures throughout the sanctions regime
4. Strengthen the sanctions work of the UN Secretariat
5. Although different, much can be learned from the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee
6. Effective sanctions require capacity-building and training programs
7. Implementation can be enhanced through a model law
8. Implementation will vary depending on the type of sanctions
9. Maintaining accuracy in sanctions targeting is crucial
10. Reporting on sanctions implementation

The final report from the Stockholm Process suggests that to make sanctions effective, they have to be implemented through a chain of actions involving all levels of decision-making: the Security Council, Sanction Committees, Member States. International organisations, the private sector and NGOs also have roles to play. In the process, led by Professor Peter Wallensteen at Uppsala University, three working groups developed a number of recommendations. In addition, specific proposals are made for different types of targeted sanctions.

The report is available on www.smartsanctions.se and at Department of Peace and Conflict Studies in Uppsala, phone: +46 18 471 16 96, fax +46 18 10 63 97.

Tore Samuelsson

Advising EU on conflict prevention...

The report *Ensuring progress in the prevention of violent conflict* is the result of a joint initiative by International Alert and Saferworld. The purpose is to enhance the EU's ability to prevent violent conflict through providing quality research and expertise, based on

experience in conflict-affected regions. The report outlines five key issues for EU member states and the Commission to address in order to enhance the EU's capacity to prevent violent conflict:

- Mainstreaming conflict prevention policy and practice within EU policy
- Strengthening EU-Africa engagement in conflict prevention
- Integrating crisis management with conflict prevention
- Tackling terrorism, organised crime and illicit trafficking
- Enhancing co-ordination across EU institutions

Each chapter is illustrated by one or several concrete case studies, and there are clear recommendations (to EU) under each heading, which makes it a very practical and useful document. The report has been produced in collaboration with the European Peace-building liaison office (EPLO). Contact Alice Hutchinson (ahutchinson@saferworld.org.uk) or Lindsay Alexander (alexander@international-alert.org) for copies of the report or to discuss the content.

... and on future development cooperation

A discussion paper, *European Development Cooperation to 2010*, from UK-based Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the European Centre of Development Policy Management in the Netherlands is laying out the agenda facing Europe in coming years. The six themes are:

- The development landscape to 2010
- Europe in the world
- Trade
- Development and humanitarian aid
- Politics and partnerships
- The architecture of development cooperation

The authors, Simon Maxwell and Paul Engel, assisted by a group of collaborators, Ralf J. Leiteritz, James Mackie, David Sunderland and Bettina Woll, report about the significant change in European development cooperation since the 1990's. And there is more to come with a new wave of changes at the horizon. The scenario planning exercise in the paper identifies two key drivers of European development cooperation. The first is the depth of commitment to coherence, as opposed to independent policy-making by Member States. The second is the degree of commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, especially the goal of halving global poverty by 2015. The four scenarios suggested are: Integration, Compartmentalization, Segmentation and Individualization. Get hold of the paper and read more about the need for a "road map" for the EU. Contact the respective institutes for the paper and more information: info@ecdpm.org and publications@odi.org.uk

Tore Samuelsson

Meet LPI Board Member Elsi Takala

Elsi Takala from Helsinki, Finland, has been a member of the LPI Board for one year. She is an agronomist by profession and has worked for twenty years at the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Elsi Takala is one of the 58 000 members of the Orthodox Church of Finland. New Routes asked her a few questions, which she answered just before she went to work as a volunteer for a couple of weeks in the garden of the Valamo Monastery in the lake region of Finland.

What is the driving force behind your work, both in your commitment as an LPI board member, and in your daily work at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs?

I believe that God has meant us to be his co-workers in order to make true love grow and be fulfilled already in this world. The joy of Easter, the resurrection of Christ, should give us the strength. It is true that in the daily work, in the middle of news about wars and violence in the world or petty quarrels in the Ministry or in parish council, it is not always easy to remember this.

You have long experience in international work. What are the most important experiences you have had and where did you have them? What use can you make of them today?

One basic experience, which has helped me throughout my work, comes from the ten years I worked in agricultural research and extension in Finnish Lapland, the northernmost part of my country, before joining the Ministry. There I learnt to recognize the centre to-periphery nature of society and the usual experiences of peripheral groups (often very true both at the local and global level!): 'Those in the centre do not understand our point of view'. Keeping this in mind makes it easier to see people behind figures and papers and to avoid excessive bureaucracy.

The time in Lapland was also otherwise useful. The indigenous Same people are a very non-aggressive people. There is no word for 'war' in the Same language. Maybe the extreme climatic conditions have forced people to concentrate on essential issues.

Belonging to a minority church in a small country (5 million people), with a

language not related to the languages of our neighbours, has also been helpful in understanding the situations and survival mechanisms of different minorities. The importance of trying to learn and understand other cultures I learnt very early from my mother. She was a professor of education and already in 1960's-70's did a huge job in Finland to promote peace education and international understanding.



Elsi Takala enjoying her work in the monastery of Valamo.

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