

# CONFERENCE "THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN PEACE-BUILDING PROCESS" PUBLICATION



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# CONFERENCE

## “THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN PEACE- BUILDING PROCESS”

# PUBLICATION

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# INTRODUCTION

The role of youth in peace-building process is an extremely valuable issue to discuss and reflect on in the context of social development. The youth represents a large part of the world population and therefore poses a number of challenges and opportunities. Development of our societies requires all possible economic, educational, intellectual and sustainable resources that youth can contribute to.

Sustainable development of our societies combines two highly relevant factors: building sustainable peace on one hand and empowering resourceful social groups on the other hand. We strongly believe in peace-building process whereby all social groups actively participate in building all spheres of society and contribute to respectful relations to all human beings and constructive ways of social interaction, support infrastructure and positive mechanisms of non-violent actions and lifestyle by having access to information and education based on freedom and equality.

With regards to current discourse in our societies in thinking and building peace, we aim to advocate large-scale initiatives to be integrated in existing social systems and mechanisms. One of our main goals in the nearest future is to introduce peace and peace-building into our education systems, through the cooperation of research institutions, government and civil society organizations.

Together with our partners - the Croatian Youth Network, the Institute for Social Research, Documenta – Center for Dealing with the Past and the Spanish Youth Council, we have been implementing activities within a year-long project called '**Youth and Peace-building**'. It is our goal to mainstream peace and peace-building in the education system of the Republic of Croatia as well as into the strategies and policies targeting youth at all local and national levels.

In order to learn from experiences of other countries and societies, we organized the conference 'The Role of Youth in Peace-building' directed to exchange of knowledge and experience in the areas related to broader corpus of peace-building topics, such as **understanding and transforming conflict, dealing with the past and peace-building** itself.

Fifty participants from across EU, Euro-Mediterranean and Western Balkan countries were provided an opportunity to initiate dialogue among neighboring and distant cultures and to discuss issues related to peace-building and the role of youth in these processes, enhancing cooperation among institutions and NGOs as well as to discuss and develop recommendations regarding topics that would be advocated in national youth policies and strategies and other broader policy strategies. The conference content was summarized and reflected on in this publication.

This publication is composed of conference lecture papers, conference declaration document, conference programme and list of participants. At the beginning of the publication, the reader will be introduced with the **Conference Declaration** document reflecting all conference discussion and workshop outcomes as well as all other recommendations that came across. The declaration document encompasses the role of youth and youth organizations in creating and sustaining peace as a choice and a lifestyle. It emphasizes relevant role of youth in continuous conflict transformation and dealing with the past. Furthermore, the declaration recommends developing formal education system peace curricula and its inter-relatedness with non-formal education programmes. Finally, the declaration formulates recommendations on peace-building methods and actions. Recommendations are directed at both governments

and non-governmental youth organizations with regards to peace mainstreaming into strategies, legislature and practice.

The second part of the publication is meant to be an impulse for reflection and learning. It presents several academic, activists and citizens' approaches to the youth and peace-building. Starting from Ms. Emina Bužinkić's affirmative claim of perceiving young people as a **social resource** and unavoidable social protagonist for better or for worse, first paper stresses constructive **youth engagement** by demonstrating their capacity to build **transformative potentials** of and for society. The paper written by Mr. Jose Angel Romo stresses the vital role of education for peace as a ground to transforming conflicts in a non-violent way and the relevance of **youth work in creating culture of peace and a fairer society**.

Mr. Arno Truger raises several questions on **challenges and conditions for effective peace-building** by introducing complexity of tasks for peace builders. It offers the reader an understanding of peace-building as a comprehensive approach emphasizing human security and basic human, non-violent means, and a multidimensional peace-keeping approach based on a co-operative and co-ordinated but distinct platform.

The following three papers were gathered to explore different practices of peace-building in three different world areas that vary in historical backgrounds and conflicts experiences. Ms. Vesna Teršelič presents the political reluctance to **deal with the past in the post-Yugoslav area** and reflects on the influences of a 50-year-old and a more recent conflict to the life of the youth nowadays. The paper of Mr. Nicolas Moll explores **youth and dealing with the past in Western and Central Europe** mainly focusing on Franco-German cooperation on conflict reconciliation which, as he proposes, could be used as a tool for reconciliation in the post-Yugoslav countries. Ms. Orli Fridman reconstructs the Israel and Palestine conflict through her paper exploring real possibilities of building peace.

Final paper raises a number of questions and notions on **when the change begins** reflecting on **historical examples of non-violent actions** and their implication today. Author Mr. Brian Phillips finds inspiration in the White Rose movement and the legacy of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Ghandi. An additional text of Amer Hidmi explores **lost opportunities for resolving conflict** between Israel and Palestine.

At the end of the publication, the reader will be introduced with detailed conference agenda, lecture topics, workshops and discussions as well as to all lecturers' and workshop leaders' names. In addition, a list of all participants with their contact information will be attached.

We hope this publication to be informative and stimulating in contributing to positive changes and lasting peace in our societies.

Youth MIRamiDA Team  
Centre for Peace Studies



# THE DECLARATION

*The role of youth in peace-building has been of significant value for the development of societies - especially as youth throughout the world have been and continue to be affected by past events, including violent conflicts and other challenges to living peacefully. Youth as an integral part of society have the influence and the power to change societies. They therefore need to be perceived and encouraged as active social protagonists. Today, as young leaders of our societies, we opt for a positive concept of youth participation in peace-building – one based on a profound commitment to conflict transformation, the need for dealing with the past, non-violence, and respect for human rights.*

*The conditions for active youth participation in building peace should be established by all social actors and in all areas of society. Through this declaration, we would like to emphasize that peace begins with each of us. We all carry responsibility for today and tomorrow. We must live our commitment to peace by further combating injustice and discrimination.*

## **Conflict – understanding, prevention, transformation and peace-building**

As young leaders, we witness many conflicts and the different ways in which young people are involved in them - mainly as victims, violators, or observers. We believe that young people should have a different role in society, one that contributes to that society through creative, peaceful ways of life and which enables their natural growth. We believe it is necessary to teach young people to understand conflicts and to become capable of managing them on every level - as well as fostering their capacities for self-learning. We urge young people and societies to create all those conditions necessary for sustainable conflict prevention. Conflicts vary in nature – hence, approaches to preventing and understanding conflict situations will also vary.

The development of a culture of communication and transformative human relations based on consensus is essential. We believe that understanding a conflict requires perception of it as a challenge from which one can learn. We see all conflicts as having a great potential to become different, new ways of interaction and cooperation. We believe in the commonly-held view that emphasizes that all conflicts can be transformed in a non-violent way, through practices such as mediation, in order to create and strengthen a variety of personal and other social relationships.

Conflict prevention, resolution, management, transformation and mediation should be continuous and comprehensive segments of a demanding process – a positive, long-lasting endeavor in which investment is required.

We, the young leaders, want to change the world to be peaceful and fundamentally built on the principles of non-violence, solidarity and equality. We believe that practices of peace-building should be developed on various complementary levels, starting from personal behavior and leading to interactions and relationships between institutions. Every peace-building practice starts with individuals and local communities. We would like to stress the importance of developing personal and public practices that contribute to creative, peaceful societies – societies which will then interact with each other in ways that stimulate human development.

### *Dealing with the past*

We would like to emphasize the relevance of dealing with the past. Knowledge of the facts regarding historical events and their consequences helps us to overcome past violence that was committed in our name. Overcoming and dealing with the violent past of our parents, brothers, grandfathers and neighbors is of the utmost importance for future steps toward peaceful personal and social relations. We believe that dealing with the past is an interdisciplinary way of understanding numerous perspectives and the past experiences of a wide variety of actors in society. It is necessary to stimulate and sustain dialogue about past conflicts, avoiding collective responsibility and instead establishing individual guilt. We believe that it is highly important to learn from past conflicts in order to prevent future ones and to build society on a collaborative basis. In addition, we would like to emphasize how important the role of media is in dealing with the past processes - due to its wide influence. We emphasize the need for freedom of the press and of expression - based on truth and a critical approach which avoids the dissemination of any untrue or biased information.

We believe learning about history builds a healthy basis for a society and its growth, and creates opportunities for young people to be responsible toward the past. We encourage the allocation of the resources needed to enable effective learning and critical thinking about the past and present. Learning from others can guide us in an effort to overcome conflicts and past divisions and to prevent future ones. By teaching history objectively, different narratives will also have to be confronted. For example, this can be done through cross-border encounters focusing on historical issues - where young people are exposed to different views and historical narratives. Such approaches have to be developed and delivered in an inter-culturally sensitive manner by educators or teachers, and through other approaches such as multinational history text books.

We, the young participants of the conference, feel that dealing with the past is an important issue for our future and our present. Such processes can play a major role in our understanding of the latest world-wide events - as youth should be playing a major role in dealing with current conflicts and also in preventing them. We believe that it is necessary to present historical events as facts and as narratives which do not distort analysis or impose collective guilt. Youth must therefore be provided with different perspectives, sources of historical data and analyses of past events - in order to give them the chance to understand the perspectives and viewpoints of other parties involved. Dialogue about collective responsibilities is necessary – and learning from past conflicts is essential in order to help prevent similar conflicts in the future. Avoiding biased or harmful coverage in media regarding past events is crucial here – and responsibility for past events should always be assigned to individuals rather than to ethnic or other classification groups.

We do not wish to see young people become objects of manipulation by different political parties, but rather to play an active role in their societies through critical thinking and analysis of past events. This can be furthered through the use of current technologies to assist the historical learning process (i.e, internet websites). Documentary and reportage films, as well as cinema, are also important learning resources - as these media can be very valuable tools for the purpose of effective learning. Learning from the historical experiences of conflict in other countries - and how these societies have dealt with their past – should also be encouraged.

As a result of our discussions about dealing with the past, we recommend the following:

- To include family narratives in the teaching of history, as family stories can be an effective way of passing on historical facts and events to youth and to the next generations, always trying to represent as many different views as possible

- Increase the awareness of youth and new generations not only about regional historical events but also the critical events in world history - for the purpose of preparing them to play an effective role in dealing with the past in relation to global conflicts
- Using documentary and reportage films, as well as cinema, as learning resources - as these media will be very important for the purpose of effective learning
- Relating the issue of responsibility for past events in historical learning resources to individuals instead of ethnic or other classification groups. This would be an effective step toward the elimination of the negative feelings between different cultures
- Create space for young people to exchange their views, opinions and experiences of past conflicts in the frame of formal and informal events - so that more information and clarification is provided, and mutual understanding and respect is established through peaceful, interactive means of discussion and mediation.

### ***Education for Peace***

We understand peace to be a broad and complex enterprise that requires continuous, sustainable approaches. We perceive peace to be the greatest value - but also a social practice based on socially just relations and equality. Investment in the development of peace culture is highly relevant in many different ways. We see education for peace as an essential and indispensable mechanism to create a healthy social foundation and to ensure social growth.

Education for peace is a fundamental tool to teach principles of non-violence, respect for human rights, justice, and equality - and the promotion of dialogue. There are many subjects to be taught, including non-violent communication and non-violent conflict transformation skills; youth participation; education for peace; non-violence; and human-rights - together with environmental sustainability; gender equality; and human security. Education about these topics should always be grounded in a non-violent, interactive, participative methodology.

Education for peace can be incorporated into different subjects already existing within the formal educational system - such as history, ethics, religion, philosophy, sociology, sexual education, psychology and others.

We would like to stress the necessity of adopting and developing formal education curricula concerning peace - and of implementing it on all educational levels, starting from primary school and continuing on into secondary school and at the level of higher education. Furthermore, peace education must be included in teachers' training - both through training of teachers in schools and as a distinct subject in the academic curriculum for teachers' training.

Young people should adopt skills for peaceful interaction and critical thinking - as well as integrating values and principles of peaceful living. Formal education peace curricula should aim to empower young people to participate in their communities, to organize activities, to generate cooperation among community members, and to stimulate dialogue and non-violent approaches to everyday life.

We emphasize the importance of combining formal and informal peace education in societies in order to foster fully-developed social capacities for the building of peace in our communities.

Schools can benefit from the expertise of informal educators, who are experts in their particular subjects and methods (especially while peace education is not yet fully in-

egrated into teachers' training.). A new self-conception of schools is needed. Schools should open themselves to their particular community in order to deepen the relationship between formal education processes and the pupils' wider environment. In this way, the impact of peace education would better integrate into community life.

Promoting international and inter-cultural cooperation among youth has the potential to create common ground - by allowing young people to know each other and to work together for common goals, thus helping to prevent conflicts. Mixed education opens opportunities for dialogue amongst youth, for example through programs that grant scholarships for Palestinian students in Israeli universities and vice versa.

### ***Recommendations to governments and civil society***

In the course of these interactions on the role of youth in conflicts and their transformation, dealing with the past and building peace, a series of recommendations emerged:

- Youth should **participate equally** in decision-making and policy-developing processes - by continuously encouraging active youth participation in building societies through civic or political organizing
- Positive educational reforms in the field of peace and nonviolence should be encouraged. We urge governments to include non-violence and democratic citizenship concepts in developing **peace education curricula**
- Peace education must be incorporated into teachers' training - both by training teachers in schools and as a distinct subject in the academic curriculum for teachers' training
- Governments should enable all victims - including young people - **access to their rights**, such as truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of a peaceful environment
- Greater attention should be paid to **young women** on an equal basis – as well as to all under-participating and marginalized **youth with fewer opportunities** in their society, such as youth with disabilities, rural youth, youth at risk etc.
- Governments should support **youth organizing on a large scale** - and youth participation through cultural activities, exchanges, projects, study visits, conferences, and networking.
- Governments must provide a healthy and stimulating environment for **civic organizing and non-governmental work**, and support capacity building and community programs
- It is essential to develop **youth public policies** that aim to increase youth participation and stress the role of youth in creating peaceful societies - in parallel with building **universal standards** for youth life-quality
- Governments and the **private sector** should cooperate together to increase youth employment and the use of new technologies that could connect people world-wide
- **International institutions** such as United Nations ought to increase the amount of resources dedicated to youth peace-building activities, and for the support of networking and collaboration in growing peace in our societies
- Non-governmental youth organizations should be open to **cooperation with formal public institutions** in order to foster full capacities for building peace
- Non-governmental youth organizations must be **open and flexible**, sensitive to and oriented towards **peoples' and community needs** by creating networks, establishing mutual support, peer to peer activities, common platforms for peace advocacy, and the sharing of resources and ideas
- Non-governmental youth organizations should **evaluate** their work and create opportunities for follow-up reflection that will encourage **steps forward**
- Cross- border, non-governmental youth organizations can and should develop

**peace-building strategies** in cooperation with national institutions regarding issues in their own county or region. These could be opportunities to speak about current or latent conflicts - and would provide opportunities to learn from different perspectives in order to establish more **peaceful societies** and to foster **mutual cooperation** in both informal and formal ways that help to create sustainable peace.

- Non-governmental youth organizations should cooperate in creating open spaces for **international youth forums and networks** in order to encourage **trust-building, intercultural sensitivity, and broad cooperation**.
- Youth have a greater claim to participation in **negotiations and peace-building actions** concerning the future - and must be given the chance to fulfill this role effectively.

# LECTURE PAPERS

## THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN PEACE-BUILDING PROCESSES - MULTILEVEL CROSSROADS

*Ms. Emina Bužinkić*

Croatian Youth Network & Centre for Peace Studies

According to the common understanding there are several ways to understand peace-building.

The most encompassing one embodies capacity-building, reconciling and transformative social activities after armed or other violent conflicts directed to the creation of lasting peace. Lasting positive peace implies sustainable community capacity-building and a constructive non-violent approach to communication and cooperation among community members. Positive peace requires responsibility for social transformation, just social relations and positive values. Stimulating youth to participate in the development of the culture of peace and non-violence makes a valuable contribution to affirmative and constructive social change.

In most developing societies youth represent a crucial potential for development. However, most of the world societies neglect that relevance. Youth is a major social protagonist involved in conflict situations. Today 300 000 young people are soldiers and thousands of them have been used as human shields. This is not exactly the role youth should be playing in this world. Youth has traditionally been perceived as a problematic social group. Youth are considered only as part of the problem but not appreciated as part of the solution; they are regularly excluded from the peace-building or reconciliation processes.

The role of youth in promotion of peace and participation in creating long-lasting peace has been of great importance. Creation of peace culture with youth playing active role ensures lasting social development. By constructively engaging youth and demonstrating a capacity to foster an atmosphere that provides young people with positive options for their own present and future and dissuading them from engaging in violent behaviour, the society builds its own transformative potentials.

A growing young population throughout the world presents numerous opportunities and challenges. The energy, creativity and idealism of youth can enrich cultures, open political processes, build civil society and promote peace and understanding. I shall focus on the role of youth in different social spheres in building peace and culture of non-violence, models of youth empowerment and strengthening youth participation in building just social relations. I believe youth are active community stake-holders in creating lasting peace.

For me, as a young person and a young activist, peace represents the most valuable goal the human kind could ever strive for. When I think of peace, I do not see it as a state without war or armed conflict. On the contrary, war and conflict are clear indicators of a non-peace situation, but the non-existence of war shows only how much

more it is necessary to call something a process of peace. Long lasting, sustainable and just social relations refer to peace as a comprehensive non-violence pattern of social development. How do we reach that state? What capacities do we need in order to reach it?

Today, nearly half of the world population is under the age of 25. More than 85% percent of them live in developing countries and are very much affected by HIV/AIDS, climate change, poverty, war, conflict and other disasters. Even in more developed societies, there are young people affected with sexually-transmitted infections, poverty, inadequate education and illiteracy, with no access to information and leisure activities.

Contemporary societies observe youth through two main perspectives. Not both of them are equally present. Depending of the social perspective, young generations develop in one way or another. One of the most common perspectives of perceiving and dealing with youth is concentrating on youth as a problem. This implies perceiving youth through a lens of social protection and treating them as a sensitive population characterized by a diverse array of problems such as addiction to drugs, for instance. On the other hand, we have a perspective of treating youth as a resource, a valuable resource for social development. This approach would definitely register addiction to drugs as a serious issue, but the way it would deal with it is different.

The first approach would put emphasis on prevention programs such as counseling and advising, and the second would detect both causes and consequences and state something along the lines of.: Today in Croatia 34% of youth are unemployed which is double the general population unemployment rate. We mark high unemployment of youth in the city of Split, and we see many young people living lives of unemployment and desolation. The reason for high drug abuse would certainly be linked with the fact that there is a significant unemployment rate in the city. The first approach would work on drug abuse prevention through counseling and education. The second approach would connect these two fields and look for multilevel solutions such as: stimulating employability – through both formal and non-formal education whereby youth would be taught practical knowledge and social skills; creating institutional mechanisms that would connect youth with the private sector, stimulating counseling and advising and so on. This is the matter of combining approaches in order to create multilevel possibilities and improved conditions for active participation of youth in society.

Relying on the rationale of the previous perspectives, young generations are usually seen as the future. They are the future. We are the future. Next young generations are the future. But we are the present too. And that should not be neglected. Most of political leaderships would state that youth is the future. I would strongly disagree with that. Not because we are not the future, but because we are also the present and our potentials must be used at this very moment. To perceive youth as the future does not give us any guarantees that political leaderships will be willing to support our present and contribute to the creation of conditions for our independence and active participation.

The key question is not how many young people live in your country. The key question is how do you deal with that people? Debates based on numbers of percentages are meaningless if there is no vision, no strategy, and no will to stimulate the development of that population. And that is precisely what is relevant if young generations are to be seen as an integral part for the vision of the entire social growth.

When talking about sustainable models of youth participation in peace-building processes, I would like to stress at least two complementary approaches.



Primarily, we should be aware of how formal education systems are relevant for the overall development of youth, strengthening their skills for everyday communication and non-violent patterns of behaviour. Complementary to education strategies and the notion of life-long learning, formal peace-building school curricula are fundamentally necessary in order to incorporate human rights and peace values into the behavioural patterns of young generations.

The design of education curricula should be based on adoption of certain skills and knowledge such as peace and peace-building, understanding of conflict and its transformative potential, understanding of violence and its consequences and, related to that, building conditions for non-violent acting, prevention of discrimination, segregation, isolation, extreme nationalism, xenophobia and other kinds of violent relations towards other human beings. In designing school curricula special attention should be paid to the adoption of values such as equality, non-violence, tolerance, cooperation, empathy, freedom, respect, synergy, patience, harmony and solidarity. Furthermore, youth should be taught just how terrible consequences of wars and conflicts are by being introduced to historical facts.

Moreover, it is of utmost importance that school curricula should encourage youngsters to use non-violent methods of communication and behaviour in everyday life in order to be able to contribute to a more direct personal employment of constructive ways in dealing with everyday challenges. Youth should be empowered through appropriate education which should meet their basic personal and social needs and build skills and competences that allow them to contribute to wider societal developments. They should acquire new ways of learning and be empowered by learning how to change. According to the International Commission for the 21st Century there are four pillars of learning each person should acquire: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. I would definitely add learning to change.

Of course, we need to be realistic about the challenges we face in the creation of ideal education environment and be aware of just how broad and comprehensive capacities it requires. The management of such an education is not easy. However, I am eager to suggest, with no intention of neglecting those challenges, strong cooperative step-by-step moving forward, led by the idea that education is the key to the transformation of the culture of violence and building the culture of non-violence. Only through education which is capable of integrating all positive values, knowledge and transformative personal social skills, which is inclusive and embracing diversity, can we transform the culture of violence to the culture of peace and non-violence.

Secondly, with my own background stemming from a youth organization which engages with public institutions and stimulates dialogue among institutions and youth organizations, I must stress that public strategies directed at youth must have a clear development vision. Usually called youth policies, but also world or national youth action plans, these documents state political attitudes and political will of public institutions to deal with youth in a certain way. Depending on whether they perceive youth as a problem or a resource, countries develop contents (and contexts) of their youth public policies.

Youth public policies should aim to stimulate active youth participation in societies on political and social levels and in economic, environmental, cultural and many other fields. Youth policies are basic strategies that should be used to empower young citizens and their active attitude towards social growth, combat passivity and apathy of young people, and stimulate particular strategies, such as education or employment strategies, and what is clearly relevant, influence the everyday quality of young peoples' lives. Active participation of youth should be stimulated also through their engagement in civil society organizations.



Youth public policies have a very important additional role, especially when taking into consideration whom they are directed at, but also who is behind them. I would like to stress that the key word underlying the concept of youth policy is responsibility. On one side, youth policies stimulate social development and quality of life of young people by contributing to their independence and responsibility. On the other hand, responsibility must also be fostered within the structures of public authorities in charge of their implementation. Youth policy is the basic process whereby active participation of youth in the peace field can be supported on a long-term basis.

# YOUTH AND THE PEACE-BUILDING PROCESSES

*Mr. José Ángel Romo Guijarro*  
Spanish Youth Council

It has often been said that the future belongs to the youth, but what about the present? The world we live in is evidently not a happy one, although we may be able to imagine or describe a better one. The return to Ithaca described by Homer in the *Odyssey*; the island of Utopia described by Thomas More; or Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* are just a few examples. Ulysses, Hitler and Bernard Marx are fictional characters, young nonconformists who try to change society and improve the world they live in.

Life in society is complex and not without conflict. The worlds described in literature and ensconced in our imagination are far from real, but that is no reason to give up. On the contrary, we should continue to fight for a fairer society in which the value of peace is enhanced. Young people should be the protagonists of the peace-building process in collaboration with all other social agents. A few concepts, however, need to be quite clear; we need a good hold on the theory before we can put it into practice.

Following are some ideas about a series of concepts which are of key importance for young people and peace-building processes. We do not provide precise dictionary definitions, but attempt to help each group of young people involved to reflect and use their own negotiated and valid definitions, not only among their peers but also with other stakeholders.

## Education for peace

Human beings learn throughout their entire life but during the childhood and youth our learning capacity is far greater. These are also the periods when we receive both formal education and benefit most from the potential of non-formal education to prepare us for lifelong learning. Education for peace should be part of the school syllabus, as it is a key component of non-formal education and the work done by youth associations.

According to writer Paco Gascón Soriano, **peace** is an active construction of justice. It is a dynamic concept which helps us to identify, face up and regulate conflicts without resorting to violence. The concept of peace is therefore rather comprehensive, as peace is not just the absence of war or violence; it is also the ability to manage conflicts in a non-destructive way. We also have to realise that there is no such thing as global and total peace, as our ability to approach conflicts in an ethical and constructive manner is what enables us to add or subtract peace and justice to the common good of peace.

As for **education**, if we consider the Latin term "*educere*", which means to let something out, it focuses on our positive potential. Education should be comprehensive, affecting all aspects of people; active, in the sense that each individual is the protagonist of his/her own education; and a source of liberation, with each individual making his/her own critical decisions.

**Education for peace** is a dynamic, continuous and permanent process, based on the concept of positive peace and a creative perspective of conflict. The goal of the process is, on the one hand, to promote the ability to face conflicts from a creative, non-violent perspective and, on the other, to consciously uphold the values of equality, respect, freedom and solidarity. This is done from a social and emotional approach,

starting with our own individual experiences and feelings in order to reflect and achieve a transformation, from our heart to our mind in order to reach our hand, i.e. feeling, reflecting and acting.

### **Conflict, violence and non-violence**

Conflict and violence tend to be seen as synonyms. **Conflict** is inherent to human relations and also a learning opportunity. As defined by Jean Paul Lederach "a conflict is the interaction of two or more parties which have, or believe they have, incompatible goals"; conflict in itself is neither positive nor negative, but rather, what can be either positive or negative is our response to conflicts, the way in which we approach them, and this is what can generate violent situations.

**Violence** can be an action, a word, an attitude or a structure which causes physical, psychological, social or environmental harm and prevents people from developing their human potential. There are different forms of violence, and we can establish four main categories: physical violence, the most visible form, addresses people's subjectivity and attempts to destroy their feelings, cause mental suffering or spread fear and hate; structural violence, an indirect and less visible form, is derived from discriminatory, exclusive social, economic and/or political structures which prevent people from satisfying their basic needs; and cultural violence refers to the aspects of culture which provide legitimacy for the above types of violence.

But the response to a conflict can be the use of **non-violence**. This idea was made popular by Gandhi, based on the Hindi word "ahimsa", which radically expresses the concept of non-violence which exists in its own right and not merely as the opposite of violence. Non-violence can be seen as a form of satisfactorily regulating conflicts; as a strategy of social transformation, analysis and awareness of injustice, non-cooperation, civil disobedience, creation of alternatives; it is a lifestyle, a search for personal harmony, harmony with others and with our context, based on cooperation, justice and solidarity.

### **Conflict-regulation techniques**

Using the terminology of Paco Gascón Soriano, **provention** does not refer to prevention but to self-provision, as if we merely prevent and avoid conflicts, we would avoid relationships. *Provention* involves anticipating conflict by developing the necessary know-how and skills, thus being aware of its generation. People tend to approach conflicts when violence arises, and this is usually the worst possible time, as people are not in the best position to reach agreements and because we tend to be concerned with a conflict's consequences and not its cause. Action is therefore required when a conflict is generated. *Provention* focuses on three aspects. Firstly, an appropriate explanation of the conflict requires seeing it not as a mathematical problem but in its human dimension, considering people's needs and feelings. Secondly, we have to discover the structural changes which would eliminate the cause of some conflicts. And thirdly, we need to promote a suitable climate and favour cooperative relations, which reduce the risk of new conflicts by learning to solve contradictions before they grow into antagonisms.

Consensus, negotiation and mediation are techniques in which the parties are voluntarily involved; they provide the solutions to the conflict. These techniques entail responses focused on the future, not on compensating for the past, and everyone wins in this process. With **consensus**, the conditions are optimal for solving conflicts without the help of a third party. With **negotiation**, the parties pool their interests, cooperate and establish common goals. With **mediation**, the parties allow a neutral third party to intervene in order to facilitate the process and foster communication.

Conflict regulation also has to consider people's attitudes and their approach to conflicts. **Evasion**: by avoiding conflict, people act as if there were indeed no problem. They fail to face up to the situation. The result is negative for all parties' interests and relations. No one wins. **Accommodation**: people become accommodated to the situation in order to prevent discomfort for others. These people lose and the others win. **Competition**: people see their own interests and needs as the most important goals, even if they have to harm others to obtain them. They win and the others lose. **Negotiation**: both parties give something up but gain something far more important, as all our needs cannot always be equally satisfied. Everyone wins. **Cooperation**: people see their own goals as important, but relationships are even more significant, so solutions are created so that everyone wins.

### **Creativity and teamwork**

Creativity is a source of solutions and one of the basic tools available for youth to apply to satisfactory conflict resolution. A good way to find creative responses to conflicts is through expression, as it enables us to develop our imagination, flexibility and the communication and improvisation skills required to teach people to regulate conflicts. Creativity is also linked to conflict-solving capacity. A bold, impractical idea can lead to brilliant, and possible, proposals. It is important to think out of the box and overcome the often unconsciously self-imposed constraints to our imagination.

Youth associations are also of key importance to foster active and creative citizenship. Teamwork and non-formal education are basic tools. Educations for peace programmes suggest the use of a five-step system in order to gradually create a team environment capable of regulating conflicts.

The first step consists of **relaxation**. Each of the team's members must feel relaxed and comfortable with the rest of the group. If the group members have not previously met, ice-breaking and introductory dynamics are required to create the appropriate atmosphere.

The second step is **affirmation** and **appreciation**. In a culture dominated by competitiveness and scorn and which is highly sensitive to others' defects and faults, mutual appreciation is the solution. Based on each individual's values, the goal is for members to feel loved and lose their fear and insecurity within the group. We usually find self-esteem difficulties or problems when it comes to showing affection to others. Appreciation dynamics are one resource which helps to enhance one's own esteem and to feel appreciated by others.

The third step is **cooperation**. It aims at fostering values such as trust and cooperation instead of competitiveness, distrust and individualism. The goal is for each individual to feel a need for the group and recognise his/her value as a member.

The fourth step is **communication**. This process aims to foster communication between people, fostering multi-directional verbal contact among the group. It is therefore easier for members to express their concerns, opinions and feelings.

The fifth step is the **regulation of conflicts**. The dynamics used here provide group members with the skills required to describe conflicts, recognise their cause and challenge them in a positive and creative fashion. Learning to satisfactorily regulate conflicts is one of the most important objectives of education for peace. At this point, group members will be able to provide a positive response to personal, group, social and even worldwide conflicts.

### **Best practices**

One of the associations of the Basque Youth Council is *Bakeola*, the peace factory. We now go on to describe three of the resources developed by this association: *Trukeme*, conflict puppets and the peace gymkhana.

Trukeme, the centre for resources related to education for peace activities and cooperative games, fosters and promotes a Peace Culture by introducing cooperation and peace into schools, leisure organisations, associations, NGOs, social organisations and society in general, by means of cooperative activities and games. This centre provides a recreational tool in the form of games in order to attain a global objective: education in the values and culture of peace.

**Conflict puppets.** In the educational world, puppets can be used as entertainment, as an educational instrument or as motivation, aimed at enhancing interest in the classroom. Puppets are used precisely because they are seen as a magical resource when the subject is a difficult one or when the objective is to regulate everyday classroom conflicts. The use of puppets encourages people to consider a conflict which does not affect them directly, and they can learn how to solve such a conflict in different ways in a positive manner. They can also be used to represent familiar conflicts, which we are often unable to express.

**Peace gymkhana.** *Tu pueblo en juego* (Your town on the line) is a project designed for young people in which, using the new technologies and as part of a virtual contest, young people have to perform certain tests and internet search challenges. They are thus able to discover different realities, increasing their awareness of other cultures and tending towards solidarity, and a Culture of Peace and Human Rights. It is based on seven representative elements: school, town hall, town square, river, hospital, house and market. Each of them contains games and Internet searches related to social peace, promoting civic values in the community with all the excitement of a contest, passing different tests in order to pass the finishing line.

## Conclusion

For Ulysses, the goal was to return to Ithaca. Peace is our goal, but we must not forget that peace is part of a process. In the end, the way we get there is as important as the goal itself. Imagination and creativity are key factors when it comes to approaching conflicts in a positive manner. Yesterday's utopias are today's reality. We therefore need to strive towards a fairer society, towards establishing a culture of peace. Our goals are feasible. Our youth work and commitment are our present.

# CHALLENGES AND CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PEACEBUILDING

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## CHALLENGES FOR PEACE-BUILDING

Peacebuilding designed to prevent violent escalation or to help transform conflicts sustainably to a lower violence form, is overshadowed by the preparation and implementation of military crisis interventions, although the latter are invariably referred to as a “means of last resort”. On the other hand, the pressing need for peacebuilding is increasingly recognised and both political and financial support is forthcoming. The following are the principal underlying reasons:

- growing number of intra-state conflicts,
- increasing world-wide economic, political, ecological and military interdependence and
- problems arising from military conflict intervention.

### **Growing number of intra-state conflicts**

One of the major challenges consists in the fact that, although the end of colonial rule and of the East-West confrontation has resulted in fewer international wars, it has failed to prevent an increase in violent intra-state conflicts and in international terrorism. Both are characterised by a multitude of multifaceted causes and by a great variety of conflict parties plus proponents. Such chaotic conflicts usually defy traditional approaches, diplomacy and military missions. The same applies to acts of terrorism, as evidenced by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

### **Increasing worldwide economic, political ecological and military interdependence**

The increasing economic, political, ecological and military interdependence causes the impact of crises to be felt worldwide (world market, climate change, migration, dismantling of democracy, armament proliferation). As a result, the rule of “non-intervention” in intra-state conflicts is giving way to the principle of legitimate intervention, and especially international governmental and non-governmental associations that have taken on security and peace policy tasks are called upon to intervene and settle conflicts. The opportunity to respond to this challenge was broadened, when the division into spheres of interest and the resulting blocking manoeuvres by NATO and the Warsaw Pact in the UN Security Council came to an end.

### **Problems involved in military conflict intervention**

The above-described development provides the legitimacy background to enhanced military efforts and the safeguarding of power-political interests worldwide. The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact has failed to generate restraint on power-political and military reasoning. On the contrary: In order to safeguard power-political interests worldwide and to legitimise military efforts, security deficits and defence concepts are broadened into a global perception of risk. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 is among the events cited as justification. The new NATO doctrine, the “new American internationalism” (US Senator McCain), efforts to build a European defence alliance or the US-American “National Missile Defense” (NMD) are cases in point. Moreover, attempts are being made to transform peacekeeping, which is traditionally based on consensus between the conflict parties and the UN, into peace enforcement to serve the purposes of complex operations in the context of intra-state conflicts.

However, the efforts bent on settling conflicts and on preventing wars through armament and military prevention are suffering from a loss of credibility and more often than not turn out to be counterproductive. The following has been clearly evidenced by military operations in the Gulf, in Somalia, in Yugoslavia, in Afghanistan and in Iraq:

- The mere preparation of military operations as a means of last resort implies the preformation and majorisation of settlement efforts by military considerations. Even the threat of external military force has failed to de-escalate conflicts. On the contrary: It has buoyed the hardliners among the conflict parties and entailed further escalation.
- Arming conflict parties against enemies that are classified as a menace, under the motto that “my enemy’s enemy is my friend” tends to escalate conflicts rather than to de-escalate them, which was demonstrated by the cases of Saddam Hussein, Noriega and Osama Bin Laden.
- In the majority of cases, the use of armed force tends to impede political solutions rather than to facilitate them. They are not helpful in solving the problems underlying the conflicts (e.g. in the case of Kosovo).
- The use of military force causes devastation (casualties – mostly among the civilian population, material damage to buildings and infrastructure, ecological damage) with long lasting consequences for the minds of the people.
- When it comes to violent intra-state conflicts, the use of armed force is even more questionable than in international wars. It is mainly the civilian population that suffers (e.g. collateral damage).
- Interventions without a UN mandate carried out by the USA or NATO weaken the United Nations and undermine the role of conflict resolution mechanisms put in place by international and national institutions and the role of international law.
- In terms of democratic policy-making the political and propagandist preparations and the back-up for the use of armed force trigger problematic developments. They generate and confirm prejudices and hostile perceptions as well as notions of military security including the legitimacy and enforcement of armament measures.
- The social costs of armament and the use of armed force are enormous.

It has become very obvious that a sole reliance on the traditional resources for state security associated with diplomatic or military strategies is not adequate. There is a lack of appropriate concepts, structures, methods, and instruments including adequately prepared experts emphasising the human security.<sup>1</sup> The violation of basic human needs constitute causes of conflicts which have to be eradicated by peace-building<sup>2</sup> based on a comprehensive peacebuilding approach emphasising the human security and basic human needs of the population in a conflict area.

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of human security was first proposed in the Human Development Report of UNDP of 1994.

<sup>2</sup> The term peace-building was created by Johan Galtung in the 1970s. For the concept of peace-building see: Lederach, John Paul (1998): *Building Peace in Deeply Divided Societies*. Washington, D.C: US Institute for Peace. Reyhler, Luc / Paffenholz, Thania (2001): *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.



## CONDITIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PEACE-BUILDING

Conditions for effective peacebuilding based on a comprehensive approach would be as follows:

### **Prevent crises escalation at the earliest possible point in time**

It is uncontested that the prevention of crises is better than their cure. It appears to be equally uncontested that there is a gap between early warning signals, of which there are usually many, and effective as well as efficient political responses (early action). There are two principal preconditions of crisis prevention:

1. Reliable early detection, based on a standardised assessment matrix for the classification of crisis situations as well as on procedures for the timing of preventive measures.
2. Feasible plans for peacebuilding, which take into account the specific circumstances and conditions prevailing in the conflict region as well as the options open to the agents capable of intervening.

Unless these two criteria are met, early warning will not be effective nor will it lead to effective early action.

### **Seek to achieve a lasting de-escalation of the conflicts**

Peacebuilding must seek to contribute to a lasting de-escalation of the conflicts. In the Supplement to the "Agenda for Peace" of former UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali it was underlined that crises will not end, once agreement is reached on a cease-fire or on elections. What has to be done, once a cease-fire has been agreed is to prepare the ground for a negotiated settlement of the conflict, which has to be implemented with "outside" support. Moreover, coordinated programmes have to be put in place which address and eliminate the root causes of the conflict.

Therefore, peacebuilding covers short-, medium-, and long-term programmes which simultaneously address both the causes and consequences of protracted conflicts. It includes not only short term crisis management in order to end violent escalation but also programmes which are related to the needs of the population in the conflict area by addressing the root causes of conflicts and which lay the foundation for social justice and sustainable peace.<sup>3</sup> Peacebuilding starts when societal conflicts tend to escalate violently ("preventive diplomacy", "preventive peace-keeping", "conflict prevention"), continue when prevention fails and violent conflicts have to be terminated ("peace making", "crisis management"), and end when conditions for negotiations of a settlement are created, a comprehensive settlement is implemented, and co-ordinated programmes are launched which ensure that the original causes of war are eradicated ("post-conflict reconstruction", "peace-keeping", "post-conflict peace-building").

### **Address the root causes of conflicts and support reconciliation processes and the establishment of new social relations**

Peacebuilding has to address the manifold (mostly civilian) roots of crises. Throughout the world, the number of people living below the poverty line is rising and currently accounts for more than half of the world population. Globalisation poses a challenge in all areas of societal development. It causes worldwide division of labour, increasing

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<sup>3</sup> Even though the term peace-building gained significant currency in 1992 when former Secretary General (SG) of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali in his "Agenda for Peace" used the term for the post-conflict phase, peace-building should also be related to the prevention phase. This was acknowledged by the SG himself in his "Supplement to the Agenda for Peace" in 1995: "The validity of the concept of post-conflict peace-building has received wide recognition. The measures it can use – and they are many – can also support preventive diplomacy."



the fragmentation of daily life (e.g. into family and work) and of societies (e.g. by excluding sections of the population) and consequently leading to disarray. The results are identity problems instrumentalised for their purposes by decision-makers who link up tangible shortcomings within societies with people's only remaining, secure basis for action: their ethnic and religious identity. Instead of responding to or taking account of needs, politicians and religious leaders instrumentalise this sense of identity for "solutions" in the form of fundamentalism or nationalism. Unsatisfied needs are exploited to boost destructive aggressions and downright violence in the service of particular interests.

Identity problems among large parts of the population and the legitimacy problems of decision makers constitute a challenge primarily to democratic policy making, which requires the conceptual integration of all social distance levels – from the intra-personal to the international. Concepts, such as "strong identity", "gender awareness", "civil society", "open society", "good governance", "subsidiarity", and "solidarity" represent the conceptual arguments conducted in this context, in which committed citizens and NGOs are playing an increasingly important role.

Awareness that the socio-political fields of conflict are invariably characterised by more than one underlying cause is essential in peacebuilding. It is counterproductive to underrate the causes of conflicts or to reduce them (e.g. to ethnicity).

Important policy areas for civilian crisis intervention, which admittedly lack clean lines of demarcation and frequently overlap, can be derived from the underlying structural conditions and the causes of conflicts given below:

UNDERLYING STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS AND CAUSES OF CONFLICTS	POLICY AREAS OF PEACEBUILDING
Human rights/ state/ society (disregard of human rights and of national, religious and ethnic groups as well as political repression and bad governance)	Protection and promotion of human rights and of specific sections of the population
Economy/ecology (misery and fear caused by social, economic and ecological conditions)	Supporting sustainable socio-economic and ecological development
Security (no separation of political and military leadership, offensive military strategies, privatisation, etc.)	Crisis prevention, peace-making, civilian peace-keeping and peace consolidation
Culture/education/information (insufficient options for cultural and artistic development, education and free flow of information)	Promotion of culture, education and information

**Gear measures to the needs of those concerned, involve and empower them and help them take charge of shaping societal conditions**

People living in crisis regions must not be instrumentalised as objects of interventions, but involved and empowered according to their needs. The following principal needs can be attributed to the four above-mentioned policy areas:

- the need for equality, self-determination and for a say in decision-making;
- the need for well-being;
- the need for security;
- the need for guiding principles and a social frame of reference.

If peacebuilding is geared to these needs, prevailing mind-sets and behaviour patterns of the conflict agents can be sustainably aligned towards a stabilisation of the situation. This is one more prerequisite for those concerned to take charge of shaping their societal conditions (ownership), so that the international players can withdraw.

### **Avoid negative effects**

When offering help in conflict situations, good intentions are less than inadequate. In ugly situations, help may even cause the opposite of what is intended. Hence it is crucial for all conflict interventions to have negative sequels that may contribute to a violent escalation of conflicts identified by means of "conflict impact assessments" and in this way to avoid adding to the harm (do no harm). It is imperative to collect sufficient background information about the conflict, its causes, its course as well as about the internal and external agents involved in it. Before an intervention, all the international players need to ask themselves the following questions:

- In what way and to what extent will the intervention help to achieve the objectives of peace and development policies and of establishing security?
- In what way will the conflict impact on the intervention?
- In what way will the intervention influence the conflict dynamics?
- Which alternative options can be considered in the decision-making process?

### **The role of embargos and sanctions in achieving political objectives is at best limited**

The more closely international organisations become involved in conflict areas, the more often they are faced with the issue of "political conditionality" - in other words, the use of incentives (more aid in exchange for democratisation and reduction of violence potentials) and of sanctions (less aid in the case of violence build-up). At a meeting devoted to development cooperation (DC), held at the Heinrich-Böll Stiftung in December 1999, it was stated:

- DC conditionality should be applied in crisis prevention whenever possible, though its impact is limited.
- Conflict identification has to be improved, i.e. objectified by institutionalising and applying crisis indicators.
- DC conditionalisation presupposes the coordination of the most important donors. Cooperation needs to be substantially improved at least within the EU, so that in certain cases (such as Ethiopia) one might even brave the US.

In any case, sanctions should never hit the distressed population, as was the case in Iraq.

### **Link development co-operation and humanitarian aid to peacebuilding**

Governmental and international organisations, such as the OECD and the World Bank, have responded to the fact that humanitarian aid and investments, often raised with great difficulty, have with growing frequency fallen victim to the violent escalation of conflicts in deeply riven societies (e.g. Ruanda). They seek to put humanitarian aid and development cooperation within the context of peacebuilding and to link up the two aspects. When helping to rebuild a society devastated by war, aid for material reconstruction should be combined with measures conducive to the social, cultural and political development.

### **Recognise the broad range of internal and external actors**

Peace-building also takes into consideration the variety of conflict parties involved. For a coherent and co-ordinated multidimensional response in peacebuilding not only diplomats engaged in preventive diplomacy or peace making are necessary. For suc-

cessfully dealing with the wide range of peacebuilding tasks, a broad range of internal and external actors, including governments, civil society, the private sector, international institutions and agencies and international non-governmental organisations is needed.

### **Utilise the specific merits of non-governmental organisations (NGOs)**

The increasingly important role of NGOs in crisis intervention is being generally acknowledged. The above-mentioned developments in the security-policy area and the problems governmental crisis management has in coping with them have been major driving forces behind the setting up of NGOs. On the one hand, NGOs owe their emergence to the fact that vital societal needs are not being met. On the other hand, they owe it to the fact that governmental organisations are considered incapable or unwilling to improve the situation.

The outcome is a dichotomy between governmental organisations and NGOs, which may vary between rejection and assimilation, depending on the attitude adopted by the two sides. In dictatorships the relationship tends to polarise towards one of the two attitudes: being either antagonistic or assimilating. In the latter case, the resulting entities are referred to as “GONGOs” (governmental non-governmental organisations) or “QUANGOs” (quasi-NGOs). In democracies the important role of the civil society and the assistance it has to offer are increasingly acknowledged by governments, and cooperation between governmental organisations and NGOs is constructive and of mutual benefit. Governmental organisations are assisted by NGOs in identifying the major political, social, economic and ecological problems and, as a result, gain legitimacy. Conversely, cooperation with governmental organisations may help NGOs to gain financial and political support in achieving their own objectives.

The specific merits of *international NGOs* in the context of peacebuilding are mainly the following:

- NGOs need not represent government interests nor comply with diplomatic conventions. This gives them greater leeway for action. Occasionally, not being an “official entity” may be to their disadvantage, since it means less political legitimacy and no diplomatic immunity.
- NGOs are less prone to be suspected of representing power-political interests which they seek to exploit to their own advantage. On the other hand, NGOs have less leverage, e.g. through economic conditionality.
- NGOs are more flexible (no long drawn legitimating procedures within individual countries or vis-à-vis partner countries) and are consequently better placed than governmental organisations to implement preventive measures.
- Some NGOs can mobilise initiatives, tools, human and financial resources, which are not or not as easily accessible to governmental organisations. What applies to a great number of NGOs is that they are understaffed and under funded and find it hard to guarantee the financial and social security of their staff (self-exploitation).

“*Internal*” *non-governmental players* are important contacts and partners for international governmental and non-governmental agents. They can make sure that outside aid is actually channelled to where it is needed and to those in need. In a situation of political dictatorship, their support is frequently decisive in changing prevailing conditions. The merits of non-governmental players, native to conflict areas, in the context of peacebuilding are mainly the following:

- The work of non-governmental agents has less to do with formal relationships and the interests of political factions and more with the needs of their protago-

nists for well-being, for a say in decision-making, for security, guiding principles and a social frame of reference (against de-solidarisation and the destruction of meaningful life).

- Non-governmental players are better placed to deal with the roots and the agents of conflicts within societies (unlike their institutional and political counterparts). Hence, they address not only the factual conflicts but also the relational conflicts, which frequently date back many generations.

However, both sides – that is to say the non-governmental players within the conflict region and those agents wishing to help them from outside - are frequently confronted with the following sets of problems:

- For non-governmental players within the conflict region cooperation with “external” agents may imply that
  - their relations with intra-state governmental organisations deteriorate and may even end in political, police and military persecution and repression;
  - their relations with other intra-state non-governmental organisations deteriorate, due to jealousies and rivalries;
  - the relationship with partners abroad may lead to dependence and an unintended, possibly even harmful modification of their objectives and activities (patronising attitude).
- For agents trying to help from outside, cooperation with non-governmental players within the conflict region may imply that their support is misused in the pursuit of objectives they never intended to achieve.

Both international agents and non-governmental domestic players must therefore proceed with caution.

### **Recognise and accept the police and military components and the necessity to co-operate with them**

Peacebuilding emphasises civilian and non-violent options that are distinct from enforcement actions. In a peace-keeping setting, peace-building is part of a multidimensional peace-keeping approach, including military and civilian components in a co-operative and co-ordinated but distinct manner.

### **Information on actions planned and on the conflict situation**

Information on the different positions of conflict parties, as well as on the positions of those willing to assist them in managing conflicts is of vital importance. International players can help to render reporting on events in the region more objective and thus counter lopsided propaganda spread by the conflict parties. Moreover, they need – as early as possible - to inform the population concerned and the institutions and organisations within the region about their plans, in order to nip rumours in the bud and also to make it easier for those in need and those willing to cooperate to contact them.

### **Step up the training of civilian specialist staff**

Successful peace-building requires well educated and trained experts, both on the political and administrative level as well as in the field. Unfortunately, too little preparation is offered. Most of the existing study and training programmes focus on state security as well as on issues related to the performance of the own institution (head-quarter perspective), and on the executive power in mission areas.

To make peacebuilding mission successful it appears essential

- to prepare staff for the general conditions in which they will have to act, i.e. for acute conflict situations, lack of infrastructure, crass prejudices and hostile perceptions, health and supply problems, dealing with traumatised people, etc. To be able to cope with these problems, people have to become capable of handling conflicts. This requires knowledge of the causes, of the prevailing conditions and of the tentative solutions of conflicts as well as of the players involved in the peacebuilding. Moreover, they will have to engage actively with their own conflict behaviour and position vis-à-vis the conflict parties;
- to prepare them for the function they will have to perform within the conflict area. Being a good lawyer does not in itself make you a good human rights observer;
- to prepare them for the mission they are going to be part of. The objectives of the mission, the organisation's special mandate and structure, strategies and logistics, but also the specific political, legal, social, cultural, economic, and security situation should be known in advance.
- International organisations, such as the UN, the OSCE and the EU attach growing importance to the preparation for missions, and more and more national and regional governmental and non-governmental training programmes are being put in place. What is still missing however, are international training standards, based on generally recognised job profiles for the various functions to be performed.

### **Improve selection and recruitment of staff**

The selection and terms of recruitment differ from organisation to organisation, from country to country and even inside countries (e.g. depending on the foreign ministry department in charge of recruitment). This faces the organisation that is recruiting staff, the applicants for recruitment and the organisation running the mission with serious problems. What is needed are compatible data bases with the data of applicants, which can be cross-referenced with standardised requirements (job descriptions) and will enable the recruitment of suitable staff for vacant positions.

### **SUMMARY**

The above-described conditions and challenges demonstrate that peacebuilding is vital if the violent escalation of conflicts is to be effectively prevented or if conflicts are to be transformed into a lower form of violence. Peacebuilding has to be based on a comprehensive peacebuilding approach emphasising the human security and basic human needs of the population in a conflict area and counteracting violent escalations flexibly and practically at an early point by non-violent means, and favouring a multidimensional peace-keeping approach including military and civilian components on a co-operative and co-ordinated but distinct basis.

To be effective, peacebuilding will have to meet the following criteria:

- prevent further escalation of crises as early as possible (crisis prevention);
- try to achieve lasting de-escalation of the conflicts (sustainability) beyond the immediate effect;
- address the root causes of conflicts and consider the great variety of policy areas involved on account of the structural framework conditions and the fact that conflicts are rooted in the areas of human rights/state/society, economy/ecology, security as well as culture/education/information;
- gear missions to the needs of those affected, involve and empower them and assist them in taking charge of societal conditions (ownership);
- avoid adverse effects (do no harm) by systematically studying possible sequels (conflict impact assessment);

- make only limited use of embargos and sanctions (conditionality) to reach political objectives;
- link development cooperation and humanitarian aid to peacebuilding (interdependence);
- seek to pool the efforts of the diverse international governmental and non-governmental players that are willing to help (cooperation);
- utilise the specific merits of non-governmental organisations and involve the non-governmental agents native to the conflict areas;
- recognise and accept the police and military components and the necessity to co-operate with them;
- supply information on your plans and intentions and help objectify reporting on the conflict situation (information);
- step up the education and training of civilian specialist staff (up-skilling);
- ensure efficient selection and posting of mission personnel (recruitment).

# THE YOUTH AND DEALING WITH THE PAST IN POST-YUGOSLAV COUNTRIES

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Consideration of the youth and dealing with the past brings to mind images emerging from two conflicting positions – loudly voiced exclusion of those who are different on one side, and courageous demonstration of solidarity on the other. However, it seems that the media gives more space to incidents involving usually young football fans causing disorder at football stadiums<sup>4</sup> than to activities aimed to affirm human rights, inclusion and solidarity. Although they often do not get media coverage, activities organized by youth groups, such as public marches<sup>5</sup> or commemorations of massacre anniversaries,<sup>6</sup> certainly deserve public attention.

Considering that young people can be found both among extremist groups and human rights activists, I wonder to what extent the public activities they organize reflect their own ideologies, or if they only disseminate ideas articulated by adults. Do young people more commonly repeat the message that emerged from violations known to them from the war or some other unsolved conflict or do they manage to rise above the splits caused by the painful conflicts and aim to learn more about those designated by adults as their adversaries? Young people are certainly influenced by the ways war events are presented in the public and history textbooks,<sup>7</sup> but equally so by the lack of true political will for impartial consideration of all facts.

The reluctance to deal with the past in the post-Yugoslav countries is characterized not only by the lack of political will to document facts about crimes (for example, by establishing the names of and circumstances in which every victim of the war disappeared or was killed), but also by the ambiguous messages being sent about the character of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes mirrored in the public opinion and commemorative culture. Messages of hate and celebrations of crimes of the Ustasas and Chetniks in the Second World War, or more recent war crimes committed in the wars of nineties as seen at football stadiums (such as shouts of the Ustasha salute during matches of the Croatian national football team) eventuated from the sluggishness and unwillingness of the political elite to indubitably condemn these acts.

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<sup>4</sup> After many years of chanting of slogans insulting to the victims of genocide, such as „Knife, Wire, Srebrenica“, customary at football stadiums in the Republic of Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a group under the same name was registered at one of the most popular online social networks – Facebook. Among founders of the group were 19- and 20-year olds. After only a few days, and following the requests coming from several thousand users, Facebook administrators shut down the group on 12 December 2008. At Croatian stadiums and big concerts, young people often chant „Kill, Kill a Serb!“

<sup>5</sup> Actions initiated by youth organizations include A Solidarity March in Zagreb which took place on 15 November 2008 to mark the International Day Against Fascism, Anti-Semitism and Exclusion, express solidarity with victims of violence and commemorate victims of genocide in the World War II.

<sup>6</sup> In 2007, after an organized action, Maja Stojanović, an activist of the Youth Initiative for Human Rights was sentenced to ten days imprisonment by the Niš District Court for sticking posters on 11 July 2005 – the tenth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, demanding extradition of the accused war criminal Ratko Mladić to the Hague Tribunal.

<sup>7</sup> More information can be found in chapter „Education System and Events from 1990’s“ in *Transitional Justice in Post-Yugoslav Countries, Report for 2007*, Humanitarian Law Center, Documenta 2008



The attitude of some of the post-Yugoslav governments towards war crimes is also reflected in the selection of state holidays. Regardless of the occasionally obvious political ambivalence about the crimes of the Nazi, fascists and their collaborators, Croatia still marks the Anti-Fascist Resistance Day<sup>8</sup>, while Slovenia marks the Day of Uprising against Occupation<sup>9</sup>. However, in 2001 Serbia ceased to celebrate the Day of Uprising<sup>10</sup>.

Equalizing the rights of the Chetniks and Partisans<sup>11</sup>, governmental institutions in Serbia have revived the Chetnik movement and followed the similar decision of the Croatian governmental institutions to equalize the rights of the Domobrans<sup>12</sup> with rights of Partisans in the 1990s. However, since this decision was reached in Croatia more than a decade ago, anti-fascism has gradually been reaffirmed in the public discussion, and all parliamentary political parties have abandoned their support of the Nazi allies, at least this is their declarative position. While there are hardly any monuments to the Ustachas in Croatia today, across Serbia and the Republic of Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina numerous monuments have been erected honoring the Chetniks<sup>13</sup>, often in the vicinity of the memorials to the Partisans and victims of Nazism.

Although many young people in the process of identification uncritically adopt what is served to them by the generation of their parents, I choose to direct my attention towards those who have chosen their own autonomous path, ready to assert their choice of going against the current by questioning the authorities and even their own parents, posing questions such as the ones from the turbulent 1968 when young Germans asked „What did you do in the war, daddy?“

However, even the young people who inquire and are inquisitive about others and those who are different, are not necessarily interested in dealing with the past. The young who organize cultural exchange activities and volunteer camps with the intention to include young people from former warring sides do not necessarily wish to learn more about the wars. In fact, they might be convinced that it is best to keep the violent past sealed in silence. Therefore, when considering a broader context of the youth initiative, I cannot avoid a question of the purpose of dealing with the past.

Why is dealing with the past important for generations of young people who might not even have been born during the wars in the 1990s? Why should the youth be concerned with the examination of the violent past taking place through documentation of crimes, public debate, court and out-of-court processing of crimes, and crime victim compensation programmes? Doesn't elaboration of the past imply sinking into the mud of the adult world marked by infinite circles of violence? Isn't there a way to sidestep all this and lay new foundations for cooperation and mutual inclusion where it will not matter who slaughtered whom in the wars of the past decades and centuries?

What type of responsibility for dealing with the past rests with the generation of young people who have only listened to stories about the war, but have not had any experiences of their own? In my opinion, which others might not share, we should all take part in the search for answers to crime. I believe that this is a way of show-

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<sup>8</sup> In memory of 22 June 1941 when the First Sisak Partisan Detachment was formed.

<sup>9</sup> In memory of 27 April 1941 and the decision to start the resistance movement against the fascist occupier, when the first meeting of Liberation Front (Osvobodilna fronta) was held in Ljubljana.

<sup>10</sup> The National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia decided to abolish the state holiday marked on 7 July, and declare the Constitution Day a state holiday in memory of the First Serbian Uprising against Ottoman Turks, which started on 15 February 1804.

<sup>11</sup> In December 2004, the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia reached a decision to equalize the rights of the Chetniks and Partisans, and introduced the Ravnogorska Medal 1941.

<sup>12</sup> Ustacha collaborators

<sup>13</sup> Nazi and Ustacha collaborators



ing that we take an active position towards victims of crime, their families and other people whose lives have been radically changed by crime. Through our response, we place ourselves on a social map and show awareness of the consequences of all kinds of crime, regardless of whether crime took place during the World War II, post-war out-of-court executions or wars of the 1990s. Because of the violations from the past and unrecognized suffering, people who have been directly affected, those surrounding them and the society as a whole find it difficult to realize their full capacity. While war and violence impede progress, physical, psychological and other violations may enable it long-term. Conflict analysis and establishment of facts may provide a sound foundation for establishment of peace, while dealing with the past has cleansing and healing potential. By documenting crimes and recognizing suffering we may release the energy that has been numbed by violation.

Crimes are not only a concern of the injured. A crime committed against a brother or a sister is not only remembered by the mother, daughter or grandfather. It is remembered by the wider family and friends. Stories about what happened circulate from mouth to mouth. People talk about suffering at family gatherings, while unrecognized crimes get only a subdued mention among adults. Still, children get to learn about suffering because of their special gift for eavesdropping on confidential whispering. I still remember stories about hushed up prison camp experiences which I heard as a girl from side comments of my family members and neighbours.

In the past there were too many crimes people could only talk about within the family circle, so even today people in our region trust what they hear within their family most. Memoirs, documents and historiographical works often cannot compete with the power of oral tradition. In a traditional culture, first-hand memories are most trusted and they are listened to most attentively. This is how feelings of fear and helplessness caused by traumatic experiences get handed down from generation to generation. The experience of exile or direct witnessing of a violent death is handed down from fathers to children to grandchildren, creating among them the same need for recognition of suffering. The pain associated with one's own experience is also handed down to the next generation, including ideological and other conflicts.

Without due recognition of suffering, crimes from the past are often used to aid escalation of conflict. In order to put an end to licitation of crime and manipulation, human rights organizations and victim associations have grown very insistent about dealing with the past. In an attempt to encourage the processes of dealing with the past and establishment of factual truth about the war, and to contribute to the promotion of public discussion from arguments about facts (regarding the number of victims and similar matters) towards a dialogue about different interpretations, the *Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights Osijek*, *Centre for Peace Studies*, *Civic Committee for Human Rights* and *Croatian Helsinki Committee* decided to found *Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past*. The key reason for this initiative emerged from the experience of concealment and forgery of war crimes and other war events that took place between 1941 and 2000 and influenced the more recent past of the former Yugoslavia and post-Yugoslav societies. Young people have been involved in all phases of the activities organized by *Documenta*, showing a particular interest in the discussion on the initiative for founding a regional commission for establishment of facts about war crimes in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>14</sup>

In the course of the last decade, among new rights in the world we have been hearing more and more about the right of victims and whole societies to truth, justice and fair compensation. I believe that public discussions on rights of victims have contributed to the shift in

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<sup>14</sup> More information on the initiative for the regional commission and activities involving young people can be found at [www.korekom.org](http://www.korekom.org)

opinion and attitude, which is also evident from recent research results on the public opinion on dealing with the past.<sup>15</sup> The results have shown that younger examinees (up to 29 years of age) have a more positive perception of the notion of dealing with the past than older examinees. Analysing the results in terms of socio-demographic differences, it can be said that the younger the examinees, the more prone they are to believe that crimes were committed not only by the Serbian, but also by the Croatian warring side.

Only the young examinees from Pula were in focal groups able to independently name war crimes committed by both sides of the war in Croatia. When asked to identify some war crimes, young people from Pula independently listed the Ovčara, Škabrnja crimes, and killing of Zec Family.<sup>16</sup>

To give more examples, in focal groups they stated „Every war is generally a crime“, and „In my opinion, there is no excuse for any crime, and everyone who has committed a crime should be extradicted. There is no explanation or interest which is above natural or national interest. A crime is simply a crime.

Young examinees supported the position that both direct perpetrators of crimes and commanders should be held responsible for war crimes. Younger examinees more often than the older ones stated that they held the political leadership and military commanders responsible for war crimes committed by the Croatian side in the war.

Although this research points to a positive trend among the youth, it is questionable whether young people will only agree to dealing with the past with reluctance displayed by the current political elite, or if they will recognize that the key to sustainable peace is in the mutual search for an appropriate response to the crimes committed by perpetrators from the generation of their parents.

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<sup>15</sup> Public opinion research on dealing with the past was conducted by *Documenta* in association with the *Puls* research agency in 2006, <http://www.documenta.hr/dokumenti/istrazivanje.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> In Ovčara crimes, more than 200 (mostly Croatian) persons were killed in the night between 20 and 21 November 1991 by members of Serbian paramilitary units. In Škabrnja crimes, more than 40 persons were killed on 18 November 1991 by members of Serbian paramilitary units. The victims were mostly Croatian women, children and the elderly. Mihajlo Zec, his wife Marija and 12-year-old daughter Aleksandra Zec were murdered by Croatian Reserve Police officers on 7 December 1991.

# YOUTH AND DEALING WITH THE PAST IN (WESTERN AND CENTRAL) EUROPE

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1. Introduction
2. Dealing with the past in France and Germany since 1945 – a comparison
3. Young people and dealing with the past: objects or subjects?
4. Dealing with the past and the construction of the French-German cooperation
5. The French-German history as a tool for peace-building processes in SEE?
6. Conclusions
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## **1. Introduction**

The European diversity reflects itself also in its different approaches of dealing with the past (*DwP*). Two examples of European countries with two different histories will be in the focus of this lecture: France and Germany. One advantage of this choice is that these two countries cover at least three difficult memories which are of importance for nearly all European countries from 1945 to today: first the memory of the Third Reich, the Second World War, the collaboration and the Shoah; then the memory of decolonization wars as the Algerian war of independence; and finally the memory of the communist regime period. The other advantage of choosing France and Germany is that, because of the numerous links between these two countries and their histories, it will also be a good possibility not only to explore each country for itself, but to analyze how dealing with the past affects the *relationship* between two former hostile countries.

The lecture is divided in four parts. First, I address the different situations and different approaches of dealing with difficult pasts in the societies of France and of Germany in comparison, by outlining the major steps from 1945 to today. Secondly, I ask for the role of young people in these dealings with the past: have they been and are they more subjects or more objects of these processes? Third, I analyze how issues about the past and dealing with it interfere(d) in the relationship between France and Germany since 1945, and more specifically in the friendship and cooperation-building process between these two former enemies, and also what was and is the role of youth in these processes. Fourthly, I explore to what extent the French-German reconciliation experience may be seen as a tool for peace-building processes abroad, and more specifically in the field of youth work in the countries of former Yugoslavia. Concrete examples of youth initiatives in the field of dealing with the past will be given all along the lecture in order to illustrate the analysis. I will finish with some general remarks concerning the relationship between reconciliation and dealing with the past, with the French, the German and the French-German experience as background.

## **2. Dealing with the past in France and Germany since 1945 – a comparison**

With France and Germany, we have two rather different European histories and two different situations after 1945. On the one hand, Germany, clearly defeated in 1945 and occupied by the victorious powers, after twelve years of national-socialist dictatorship and having started the Second World War; on the other hand, France, after military defeat and German occupation in 1940, liberated in 1944/45 and now belonging to the camp of the winners. On the one hand the responsible of the Second World War and its main vanquished, on the other hand one of its victors. How did the societies in these two countries choose to deal with their past, which memories of Second World War emerged since 1945 until today?

In the fifties, in (Western) Germany, we have, expressed essentially by the Nuremberg trials of the highest ranked Nazi dignitaries in 1945 and after, one official memory imported and imposed by the winners: the culprit Germany, guilty of starting the Second World War, of committing war crimes and of perpetrating the Holocaust. The Federal Republic of Germany accepts this legacy, but by the majority of the German society, it is not really appropriated. If the topic is touched, the attitude is often to look for excuses and to focus on the own suffering instead of own responsibility; for the majority of the Germans, the essentials are the private family memories of Germany as a victim - of the war, especially the bombings and the expulsions from Eastern Europe, and also interpretations as victims of Hitler who appears as the incarnation of all evil who had abused the Germans. As a matter of fact what is very soon dominating the public sphere in Germany is the will to avoid talking about the Third Reich and its crimes – an attitude which is not really counterbalanced by the victorious Western powers, as Germany has in the meantime become an ally against communist Eastern bloc. We have so in short in Germany in the fifties: one *official memory of the culprit Germany*, many *private memories about Germans as victims*, and above all *the will not to talk about the Third Reich and its crimes as a large consensus*. Critical approaches of the past and of this silence exist in this period (for example the movies “Die Mörder sind unter uns” (1946) and “Rosen für den Staatsanwalt” (1959), from Wolfgang Staudte), but are quite rare.

In the 60s, the things are changing. German state and society start to deal more directly with the difficult past, and the past becomes slowly a real important topic in the public sphere in Germany. German tribunals are starting to investigate the Holocaust, especially with the Auschwitz-trial in Frankfurt 1963-1965, which raises awareness about the genocide of the Jews seen until then more than one topic among others, and which focuses the attention on the German perpetrators on the lower levels (while in Nuremberg the main dignitaries of the regime had been accused), and also on the fact that many of them are living as normal and innocent citizens in Germany now. In 1967/68, the student rebellion is also clearly directed against the silence of the generation of the(ir) parents concerning the Third Reich in Germany and the continuity of elites between the Third Reich and the Federal Republic of Germany. Other significant steps: in 1979, the American TV-drama “Holocaust”, watched by millions of Germans, provokes a true shock in German public opinion. In the 1990s, the exhibition “Verbrechen der Wehrmacht” (“Crimes of the Wehrmacht”) also provokes a lasting controversial debate, as it shows that the Wehrmacht was deeply implicated in the crimes against the Jews, while it was a long time said that the evil was the SS but not the German soldier. But it’s not only the memory of the crime which gets vivid; there are also other memories that emerge more publicly. So the memory of German resistance against Hitler starts to get an important – and positively connoted - place in the memory of the Second World War. Another memory which becomes stronger in the public awareness is the memory of Germany as victim of the Second World War, especially with films and books about German victims of the allied airplane bombings.

To summarize, we can distinguish today the existence of at least five public memories in Germany concerning the Third Reich and the Second World War: the memory referring to the crimes and the perpetrators of these crimes ; the memory referring to the “Mitläufer” and the bystanders and their responsibility ; the memory referring to the victims of the Nazi persecution, especially the Jews ; the memory referring to the German population as victims of the Third Reich and the Second World War ; and the memory referring to the German resistance against Hitler. Two things mainly characterize the DwP-situation of Germany:

- a) since the sixties a sort of permanent controversial debate concerning the period 1933-1945 – contrasting with the silence of the fifties -, with strong tendencies to establish a critical memory of this past, and on the other hand also strong tenden-

cies which try to extenuate the crimes of the Third Reich – with sharp debates as a result of the confrontation of these two tendencies. A current example of these debates is the ongoing controversy on the planned “Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen” (Center against expulsions), a museum for the victims of expulsions in Europe connected to the Second World War – with the controversial dispute if it will focus more (or too much) on the German victims of expulsion in Eastern Europe in 1945 and following years, or be a memory space for all victims of expulsions in Europe.

b) Despite of the existence and persistence in downplaying of tendencies, probably no other country in the world has so largely accepted to assume the crimes that it committed. Best example is probably the profusion of public memory spaces concerning the Third Reich and its crimes, and above all the Holocaust memorial erected in 2004 in the center of Berlin. Another striking example is the German chancellor Willy Brandt in Warsaw in 1970, kneeling down in front of the Memorial for the Jewish victims of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1943.

Let me add one last thing concerning Germany: after 1989, the memory debate in Germany became even more complex, as with the end of the Communist Eastern Germany and the reunification, to the debate concerning the Third Reich added now the debate about Eastern Germany and its communist past (“Doppelte Vergangenheitsbewältigung”). The German government chose a very offensive approach of this issue, by allowing every concerned person access its dossiers of the communist secret police (“Staatssicherheitsdienst”). Some said: Lets close these archives, lets burn them, they are too stinky, but the opinion which prevailed was: The people have the right to know the truth. Since then scandals regularly appear concerning politicians, journalists and other public persons about their real or supposed former collaboration with the Stasi. A debate has also started on the crimes in the communist Germany and the question to what extent it is possible to compare the communist regime and the Nazi regime, some people criticizing that the dealing with the communist past is used as an instrument to extenuate the Nazi crimes.

Let us now turn to the situation in France. At the beginning, the situation in France is rather simple. After 1945, there is one official memory which is valid and not contested; this is the memory referring to the France of the Resistance, a memory of Heroic France. France is seen as a country full of resistance fighters against the German occupier and the resistance fighters appear as heroes and martyrs, who died for France and who managed to liberate France. In the seventies, this immaculate image starts to get cracks: the memory of the French collaboration with the German occupier, largely excluded from official memory (or reduced to some traitors), starts to come through, for example with the French translation of the book of Robert Paxton, *La France de Vichy* (1973). Awareness starts to grow in France that all French had not been resistance fighters and that collaboration was not just an act from a few. With the increasing debate about collaboration, the memory of the persecution of the Jews in France also starts to grow, and also the fact begins to emerge that the French Vichy government was more than actively implicated in the deportation of the French Jews, contrary to the former opinion that this was just a German affair. The growing of the memory of the Jewish persecution expressed itself for example by the film “Shoah” (1985) from Claude Lanzmann, and in the new erection of the Memorial of the Shoah in 2005 in Paris. Several trials of former “collaborators” in the 80s and 90s focused the debate about the collaboration, and also the revelations about Francois Mitterrand’s role in occupied France, a symbol of the ambiguities of this time and the sometimes fluid links between collaboration and resistance. Today, we have also in France quite contradictory public memories – the memory of heroic Resistance, the memory of collaboration, and the memory of the persecution of the Jews -, and a strong debate which memory should be more emphasized.

To this debate concerning the France of Vichy, was added since the 1990s an increasingly stronger debate concerning another difficult memory: the Algerian war of independence 1954-1962. The very antagonist memories in France concerning this war – between those French who had been in favor of the independence, the French settlers in Algeria who had to leave their country after 1962, the Algerian immigrants close to the resistance fighters, the Algerian “harkis” who had been on the side of the French army, and the French soldiers who had fought in Algeria - had first found no public expression and recued themselves to private spaces. With the rising of the right extremist party Front National and open anti-Arab racism in the eighties, the demand of recognition of the second generation of Algerians born in France, and the development of the “new Algerian war” in the nineties, harsh controversy gained the public sphere, a major debate focusing especially on the use of torture by the French army during the war. Both debates, about Vichy and about Algeria and colonialism, have also made emerge in France two strong opposite tendencies: those on the one hand who claim “enough with the penitence, we talk much too much about the negative sides, we have to emphasize the positive sides of colonialism, etc.”, and those, on the other hand, who put the finger on the critical dimensions of French history and claim that it is crucial to do so.

To summarize, despite strong differences, we can also see some converging points between the situations in France and Germany:

A first phase, mainly in the fifties and partially in the sixties, with a sort of memorial consensus concerning the Second World War in both countries: in France, the memory of the Heroic resistant France; in Germany, mainly the will not to talk about the period / to avoid as much as possible a critical approach of this period. Then starting from the sixties in Germany, and the seventies in France, this consensual memory gets more and more cracks, and very strong controversial debates emerge, with the strengthening will to approach openly the critical dimensions of the past. Then, since the nineties, the continuation of these debates, and their intensification by new topics - communism in Germany, colonialism in France - and the continuous fight between those who say it is enough or that it is getting too far, and whose who estimate that is necessary to continue this critical work.

### **3. Young people within “dealing with the past”-processes: objects or subjects?**

In France and in Germany, most of the time since 1945, young people have mainly been the objects or targets and not so much actors of memory policy. The role of the school is of course here very important, where the children learn a certain vision of the past which the adult-dominated-society wants to transmit to them. The history teaching in school reflects the DwP-tendencies prevailing in the society, but this means also that history teaching and school books often, with a certain delay, follow the evolution of the general debate about history. In France, after 1945, during decades pupils learned in schools the history of Resistance in occupied France, before, since the eighties, the collaboration, and since the nineties, the critical aspects of the Algerian war made their appearance. In Germany, if in the fifties the period of the national socialism had its place within school curricula and teaching, it was in a very reduced way: the Holocaust did not play an important role; concerning the Third Reich and the Second World War nearly everything was put on the back of Hitler, his entourage and the SS and of nobody else; and national-socialism was anyway put in the same box as communism under the clamp of “totalitarianism”. Since the sixties and especially the seventies, things began to change also in German schools, with a much larger focus on national-socialism and its different criminal dimensions. The teaching in school since then is often completed by visits of memorial sites of concentration camps. In connection with the school, regular research and writing contests concerning the past were and are still organized, which also reflect the state of mind of the surrounding society and its evolution. In France exists since the sixties “le concours de la Resis-



tance" ("The Contest of the Resistance"), asking the pupils to work on topics linked to the French resistance and the German concentration camp system. In Germany exists the "Geschichtswettbewerb des Bundespräsidenten" ("History Contest of the Federal president") since 1973, where pupils are invited to make concrete historical research in their city. 1980/1, for the first time, the proposed topic was exclusively focused on the period 1933-1945, with the topic "My town during the Third Reich".

In France as well as in Germany, youth thus appears quite well involved in dealing with the past-matters, but rather following the general movement than instigating it. Generally speaking, it were and are mostly historians, jurists, journalists, authors, film-makers, NGO activists, politicians who set off public debates and participate in them in France and Germany, not so much youth movements or initiatives. But there is at least one major exception to this, and it concerns Germany in the sixties. Student activities in this time, which culminated in the revolt 1967/8, were in Germany very much linked to a critical dealing with the past and the current attitude in Germany towards it. By different actions – exhibitions, articles, demonstrations -, students brought unspoken topics on the table, concerning the continuities of German elites before and after 1945, concerning the role of universities, jurisdiction, medicine during the Third Reich and more generally the role of their parents-generations: What did you do during Third Reich? How deeply have you been involved? Why don't you talk about it? How can you accept that former Nazis are quietly living and working today in Germany? An interesting phenomenon in Germany is by the way the publication of books of children of high Nazi dignitaries, often blunt critics of the parents generation (for example the book of Niklas Frank "Mein Vater. Eine Abrechnung" (1987), first published in a German newspaper with the title: "Mein Vater, der Nazimörder", on his father Hans Frank, who had been the general governor of the occupied Poland and was executed for his crimes in 1946).

On a more local level, the role of young people has sometimes also been quite important as active actor provoking *DwP*-processes. A very interesting example in this regard is the Bavarian town Passau and the role of Anna Rosmus, who participated 1980/1 as a 20-year-old pupil at the contest "Our town in The Third Reich". Trying to investigate in the town archives and by interviewing people, she was frequently confronted with harsh resistances of authorities and her surroundings concerning this research. She managed to continue and finish her research, revealing on the one hand how deep respected dignitaries of today's-Passau had been involved in the Third Reich and on the other hand how big were still the obstructions when somebody tried to discover these dark memories. Anna Rosmus' research was published as a book and was the first critical approach of the city's history during the Third Reich. At the same time the example of Anna Rosmus and her work in Passau shows how big the difficulties and resistances are to accept this past, especially in smaller towns: Openly attacked as "Nestbeschmutzer" (contaminator of your own nest), Anna Rosmus finally decided to leave her home town and is now living in the USA, where she continues to work on the Third Reich.

Two more recent examples may illustrate how today youth in France and in Germany is linked with dealing with the past - issues. In Germany the Jugendgästehaus Dachau was founded in 1998 (after political discussions that lasted almost 15 years), with a pedagogical service which organizes seminars and visits for school and other youth groups, and which works closely with the memorial of the nearby former concentration camp. Every year, around 800.000 people visit the former concentration camp, and more than half of them are young people. And one example from France: In Oradour, where the 10<sup>th</sup> June 1944 a SS-division killed the 600 village inhabitants and where the French government decided to conserve the ruins of the destroyed village as a memorial, was created in 1999 the "Centre de la Memoire d'Oradour". Before entering the destroyed village, there is now an exhibition which explains the history

of the Third Reich and of the occupation of France, and doesn't also hide the issue of French collaboration. The Centre de la Mémoire was created mainly in the purpose to work with young people, and disposes of an educational service. Every year, around 45.000 school pupils come to visit Oradour and its Centre de la Mémoire. Especially the visit of memorial sites is often linked with the hope that it will contribute to an active dealing with the past and also to the strengthening of their democratic attitudes, with sometimes quite absurdly high expectations: After a presumed right extremist aggression in Germany to a higher police officer in Passau, Bavaria, that happened last December, the ministry of education of Bavaria made the statement that every Bavarian school pupil should visit once a former concentration camp because that would be the best method against right extremism... - as if a 2-hours- visit of memorial sites could be a wonder weapon to prevent youngsters against those radical ideas AND to convert right extreme people from their ideology.

How are young people in France and Germany reacting to the dealing with topics linked to the Second World War? The number and the commitment of young people participating in youth projects linked to the history of the WWII shows that there is a real interest to deal with these topics, and to do it in a critical way. In the same time, especially in Germany, there are also other attitudes among young people to be observed: especially in the nineties, there was an increasing number of young people saying "We have talked enough about it; we don't want to hear about this anymore". This can at least partially be interpreted as a counter-reaction to a dealing-with-the-past-claim which seemed to be omnipresent in school and also as a consequence of the fact that sometimes the pedagogical approach to the topic doesn't seem appropriated and is too "moralistic" ("You have to feel concerned about it", "Look how bad it is what we Germans did"). Today, another tendency can also be observed among young people: due to the chronological distance to WWII and the fact that today's youth is already the fourth generation after the war having grand-parents that are also born after the war, for many of them the Third Reich becomes something quite distant, "the Nazis" are a historicized époque almost just like other historical periods like "The Romans" or "The Knights in the Middle Ages". In addition young people today are increasingly influenced by the media who deal with the topic as a virtual reality. Blockbuster movies like "Schindler's list" or "Der Untergang" contribute to reducing the Third Reich among young people to a collection of individual human stories, where a contextual and critical understanding of the period is often missing.

#### **4. Dealing with the past and the construction of the French-German cooperation**

The DwP-processes in France in Germany are not only interesting in themselves, but also because the histories of both countries are tightly linked, first in a very hostile way, which expresses itself in the three wars of 1870/1, 1914-1918 and 1939-1945, and then through a tight reconciliation and cooperation processes, symbolized by the French-German friendship treaty signed by de Gaulle and Adenauer in 1963. This evolution allows to ask the question how issues about the past and dealing with it interfere(d) in the relationship between France and Germany since 1945, and more specifically in the friendship and cooperation-building process between these two former enemies?

The answer is quite simple: When France and Germany started their reconciliation process; most actors of this process chose to avoid talking about the past. The argumentation was the following: the past is too delicate, the wounds too fresh, so let's not talk about it, and try to think about the future and build the future together. This attitude expressed itself in political discourses, and also in the fact that French and German government in the sixties mainly decided not to investigate German war crimes in France during WWII. Certainly, in the reconciliation process, the topic of the past was not completely avoided. One of the most famous French-German reconciliation symbols is the handholding of Kohl and Mitterrand 1984 on the graves of Verdun, where in 1916 hundred thousands of Germans and French had killed each other. But



what is interesting is the following: first, it was chosen to avoid a place linked to WWII like Oradour, - which can be considered as a still "hot memory" - and instead to make reference to WWI - "a colder memory" with the bigger temporal distance and with a battle between two regular armies ; secondly, it was not a critical historical approach, but more a political discourse with the message a) we have all suffered, b) we have to mention the past in order we can leave it behind us.

But in the same time it is not so simple: you have on both sides people who refused this "lets love each other and lets not talk about the past"-discourse and who said: we need truth and justice. A good example is the work of Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, he a lawyer in France with his family killed in Auschwitz, she an activist from Germany who became famous by giving the German chancellor Kiesinger, who had been a member of the NSDAP during the Third Reich, a slap in the face in 1968. Both were very active in France and Germany, helping survivors of the Holocaust and making public campaigns and actions in order to raise awareness about unpunished crimes and to unmask perpetrators who were now living somewhere as "normal" citizens as if nothing ever had happened, and to bring them to trial. They were in their work very actively supported by many young members of the French association "Ligue Internationale contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme". Their activism finally broke down resistances in German parliament against the ratification of a law which made the judgment of former national-socialists responsible of unpunished war crimes in occupied France possible (1975). Beate and Serge Klarsfeld also managed to unmask the former Gestapo-chief in Lyon, Klaus Barbie, who lived quietly in Bolivia, and after long years of battle obtained that he was extradited and trialed in France for his crimes in 1987.

After the eighties, World War II became a much more present and accepted topic in the French-German relationship. It expressed itself mainly in the processes against Klaus Barbie and others, and also in the fact that now topics were treated which had long been occulted because considered as "too sensitive": not only crimes of the German occupier in France and the role of the Vichy regime in the persecution of French Jews, but also other topics like the question of the treatment of German emigrants in France during the war and of war prisoners in France after 1945, the question of the destiny of the thousands children which had been born during or after the occupation from relationships between German soldiers and French women (which were considered as traitors after the liberation) ...

Concerning the youth, it is interesting to see that its role was probably more important in dealing with the past issues in the relationship between France and Germany than within their own country. Certainly, the very big majority of all French-German youth exchanges between the fifties and the eighties chose to avoid topics concerning the difficult past and concentrated on other topics. But we have also interesting examples which did not share this Let's-not-talk-about-it-philosophy. Mainly must be mentioned the work of "Aktion Sühnezeichen", created in 1958 by a member of the German protestant church, Lothar Kreyssig, who openly marked the failure of the German society - and also the German church - during the Third Reich and reclaimed penitence. In the following, ASF developed volunteer work of young German people in different countries which had been aggressed and occupied by Nazi Germany, the young people participating in (re)construction projects (for example a youth meeting center in the destroyed cathedral of Coventry) and development of WWII-memorials, support of Holocaust-survivors and commitment in social projects. Other example, in the 90s, among the most offensive pioneers of a more critical approach of French-German history was the French-German Youth Office, which initiated and organized numerous seminars with young people and students from France and Germany around the questions of emigration, collaboration, deportation, resistance, persecution during the Third Reich and the Second World War and the question how to deal with this past.

## 5. French-German history as a tool for peace-building processes in SEE?

We have until now talked about *DwP* in France and in Germany each, and also about *DwP* in the framework of French-German relationship. As last chapter I want now to talk about the question to what extent the French-German experience can be useful for *DwP*- and peace-building processes in other countries. I will therefore mainly talk about one experience, the Southeastern Europe Initiative of the French-German Youth Office (FGYO). Since 2001, with the support of the French and German ministry of foreign affairs, FGYO organizes numerous seminars with participants usually from France, Germany and one ex-Yugoslavia-country, sometimes also with several Western Balkan countries in the same time. These exchanges address mostly students and NGO activists. History is not always the main topic of these seminars, but sometimes it is: one French-German-Macedonian seminar in 2001/2003 entitled "Seeing History through the Eyes of Others" focused on a critical approach of history policy in Europe; one multilateral seminar in 2004 in Alsace dealt with the evolution of French-German history from hostility over reconciliation to cooperation; currently one French-German-Bosnian seminar about is taking place on the topic "Between remembering and forgetting: how we deal with difficult memory places in Europe". I am a strong supporter of these kinds of seminars where young citizens from France, Germany and South Eastern Europe have the opportunity to meet each other and where they directly talk about history of the different involved countries, and this for several reasons:

- a) It allows French and German participants to rediscover their own history which they have often forgotten. For many young French and German today, the French-German cooperation today seems completely normal and they are not aware anymore of the very strong hostile prejudices and feelings and the murderous confrontations which existed between both countries and the huge efforts it demanded to overcome this and to establish a reconciliation process.
- b) The confrontation with French-German history and the presence of French-German often brings the participants of different ex-Yugoslavia countries a) to discover other difficult histories in Europe which bring new perspectives to their own, b) to speak within themselves about their own historical confrontations and the recent wars, c) to speak about it in another way as if they would have been alone.
- c) It often allows to the participants of France, Germany and South Eastern Europe to enter in a discussion on the wars in ex-Yugoslavia, a topic which is most of the time avoided by French and German participants because they do not dare to address it, on the French-German wars, which French and German participants often don't think about because they think it is so far away, and also to become aware of the difficulties of dealing with these memories.
- d) It stimulates the debate among all the participants about their own history, but also about the question of what should and could be done with difficult history and how dealing-with-difficult-past and reconciliation can be put together. And it often motivates the participants to go deeper in this subject in their own country after the seminar.
- e) With France and Germany knowing so less from South Eastern Europe and vice-versa, these kind of seminars permit the discovery of other histories of other parts of Europe, and contribute so, on the grass-root level, to the construction of a real European memory.

The mentioned French-German-Bosnian project on "how to deal with difficult memory places" is at this regard very revealing. The first seminar took place in Oradour, the second in Dachau, both in 2008; the third will take place in May 2009 in Tuzla, Srebrenica and Sarajevo. The main idea is not just to concentrate on the crimes which occurred in these places. This is the first step. The main step then is to see what hap-

pened after it with these places, how these places and the people living there try now to cope with that past, and to compare different possible approaches of DwP. After the seminars in Oradour and Dachau, the Bosnian participants said how this confrontation with other difficult memory spaces helped them to become more aware about their own war memories and feelings, and how also it stimulated them in their reflection what could be done with difficult memory spaces. And I am sure that the seminar in Bosnia will give the French and German participants very much input concerning their own interrogation of dealing with the past in their own working context. Even if facing your past and dealing with it is first something you have to do for yourself, these examples are in my opinion a very good illustration how the presence of other Europeans and the sharing of other war experiences can be a great support in your own reflection and working process.

## 6. Conclusions

I will finish with some general remarks concerning the relationship between reconciliation and dealing with the past, with the French and the German experience as background.

First question: Is *not* to talk about a difficult past as a factor of reconciliation and peace-building? The French-German reconciliation experience could make us believe this. But I want to make this impression relative: First, many other factors contributed to the reconciliation process after 1945 (like a favorable economic context, the existence of a common enemy with the communist East, the linking of the French-German reconciliation to the European integration context). Second, if France and Germany mainly avoided speaking about the past in the first decades of their reconciliation process, we must not forget that this happened on the basis of a common and accepted responsibility interpretation: It was Hitler-Germany which had been the aggressor. In such a case, it appears much easier to choose not to talk about the war, whereas between countries where nearly everybody sees himself mainly as a victim, it is even more urgent to work on the past. Third, in my opinion the French-German relationship became much stronger since active dealing with the past became a part of it. In other words: As important for the French-German reconciliation process as De Gaulle and Adenauer are in my opinion the activism of Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, because their action allowed to bring unspoken truths to the surface and helped to break up a superficial consensus.

Second question: what are factors which allow linking constructively dealing with the past and peace-building processes?

First factor: trials. As long as justice refuses to do its work, things do not move on. In France and in Germany, it has been trials which provoked debates and had a huge impact on evolution of public awareness and knowledge, especially because they contributed to breaking up a dominating self-satisfied memory consensus. And those were trials which helped to clarify the question of individual guilt and to escape the trap of collective guilt (which is of course different from the question of collective responsibility).

Second factor: time? Yes and no. Of course, reconciliation needs time. But it for sure also needs people who want to go faster, who don't capitulate in front of the "we mainly need time"-argument, which can often serve as an excuse for doing nothing. Another important point linked to the time-question: to start a bilateral work of dealing with the past, it seems essential that on both sides a critical work on its own past has already be done, or at least begun, and that the willingness exists to accept to make a self-critical work on your own history. That the French-German Youth office started only in the nineties to organize seminars on critical aspects of the Second World War period, has also to do with the fact that before this time a self-critical col-

lective memory of the Vichy-Regime did not really exist in France. That does not mean that the one side has to wait eternally until the other starts; on the contrary, interference from the one side in the others business can also be very useful, as showed the example of young Jews from France who demonstrated in Germany in the seventies against the impunity of their perpetrators. Also very useful can be the intrusion from an external third party, as illustrates the impact of Paxton's Vichy-book in France and the TV-drama "Holocaust" in Germany.

Third factor: Controversy. Dealing with the past implicates controversy and pain. Reconciliation and peace-building implicates unity and overcoming divisions. Reconciliation and dealing with the past are therefore in a tense relationship. They are also necessarily complementary: active dealing with a critical past is essential to create not only superficial reconciliation conditions, and a reconciliation discourse is essential to make dealing with the past constructive and not self-destructive. But it is anyway debate and controversy on the past which will create the conditions for the evolution of awareness and knowledge about this past, and it is only offensive approaches that will be able to go against paralyzing consensus heard through "let's not talk about this" or "we are all victims" or "everybody is guilty". To put it otherwise: Reconciliation without debate and controversy is an illusion. And reconciliation, peace- or society-building without dealing with the past is dangerous: the best example is the instrumentalization and manipulation of the non-treated memories of the inner-Yugoslav civil war during WWII by nationalist forces in the breaking-down of Yugoslavia in the eighties and nineties. Another example: in France, the rising of Le Pen and of anti-Arab racism since the eighties as well as the riots of young Algerian-origin immigrants in the last years can be seen at least partially as a consequence of the long non-treatment of the memories linked to the war in Algeria, and in certain way even as a continuation of the war of Algeria in another form.

Fourth factor: not to reduce the critical past exclusively to a perpetrators-victims-scheme. Of course it is essential to nominate the perpetrators and the victims, and to work on their specific history, but it seems to me essential to nevertheless not forget those who do not necessarily fit in this scheme: especially those who helped people from the other side – one, because they have also been part of the reality, second, because their memory and history seem to me essential for the reconstruction of a society, as a symbol of courage, civism and solidarity above front lines.

Fifth factor: the distinction between history and memory. It is important to understand that we have here two different ways of relation to the past: memory ("I remember") is something personal, the lived own experience of an individual or a clearly identified group, linked with emotions, and which situates itself in the present; History ("Once upon a time") is (should be) a narrative involving distancing, and is turned to the exterior, as transmission of facts and knowing of the past. A society needs both: memory for the identity construction of a group/ different groups, for example through commemorations ; History to be able to take some distance from these memories and to come to a more general knowledge of the past, especially through history research and teaching. Both are complementary and interdependent: memories are sources and objects for the construction of History, and can help to make official history narratives relative, and history research can help to build and to appease memories. In the same time, it is often only when memories become more appeased that history writing becomes possible. Both can also be in contradiction: history narratives come into conflict with memories if these feel ignored or not well integrated or attacked by them, or if these memories try to dominate history. But although (or because) there are so much connections and overlapping between history and memory , and because both are essential for dealing with the past, it is absolutely essential, also in order to find a balance between them, to distinguish both: if you make the confusion between them, if you consider memory and history as identical, then it will be impossible to

get some distance to the past, and try to find a common basis (with the inclusion of contradictions!), and it's the open door for eternal war memories without any constructive issue.

Third question: what can be the role of youth in dealing with the past and peace-building processes? The French and the German experience show that the role of young people can be really important, sometimes even as pioneers in developing dealing with the past processes. In different manners: By investigating, trying to find facts and establish an interpretation of the past as did Anna Rosmus for Passau. By getting angry and openly not accept the current situation of impunity, as Beate Klarsfeld and her colleagues. By bringing people together, and doing concrete memory and history work with contemporary witnesses or on memory sites, as does the French German Youth Office since the nineties, or as does, in another context, for example the Center for Nonviolent Action from Sarajevo and Belgrade by bringing war veterans from Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina together, in public forums, in training activities, and in common visits of atrocities sites. By all these actions, young people help to deconstruct a glorified past or to make emerge an occulted past, to bring antagonistic memories together and to treat openly and constructively a difficult past.

Of course, all these things can and should also be done by older people. But the youth can or should partially fill this role better for two reasons: one, being only in the process of integration into a society they can also be and more critical towards that society and more open-minded for new approaches; second, if they are born after the critical events, they have a bigger distance to the events as the parents generation involved. Young people, as second generation, can so help to approach the past of the parents generation if these are unable to face it (because they are too much traumatized or they don't have the instruments) or unwilling to do it (because too much compromised), and help to express memories, to ask for their recognition, and also to criticize and to construct History, as did many second or third generation associations of Algerian-origin-immigrants in France by working on the past of their parents generation.

Last question: To what extent the French German experience can be useful for other regions, like SEE? In my opinion it can be useful if basically one thing is done: *not* to present it as a model as it is sometimes done. Why? A) Because presenting something as a model makes it much more difficult to approach with a critical mind. And of course, French-German history deserves and needs as much critical approach as each other history process. B) Because presenting French-German as model makes it much more difficult to insist on the differences which exist between the French-German history and the Balkans, which are important to keep in mind in order to make a serious comparative work. C) Finally because presenting French-German as a model makes look *DwP* as a one-way-work, as if Germans and French could not also learn from the Balkans. – No, the French-German history is not a model, it is one example, one specific historic experience, but in any case a very interesting one, especially for other European countries, because it is also situated in Europe and because it contains so many different European memories. It is useful in two ways: First, because it shows that overcoming war and hatred, even between countries who considered themselves as "hereditary enemies", is possible. Second, because the analysis of the way France and Germany overcame the war-period allows a critical and stimulating approach of the issues of reconciliation and dealing with the past. Of course, the French history, the German history, the French-German history is very specific and unique, as is the history of the recent wars in ex-Yugoslavia. And of course the post-war situations are very different between France in Germany after 1945 and the Balkans after the nineties. But the essential challenge is always the same: how to get from a war-situation to a peace-situation, how to deal with a difficult past, how to bring together dealing with the past and reconciliation? Despite all the differences, the confrontation with

other experiences can be very useful for supporting constructive DwP-approaches, by stimulating questioning and debates and permitting the entry of new perspectives. It seems essential to me to try to define "lessons learned" from one experience as the French-German one, not in order to say: "you have to do it like that", but in order to be able to ask the question to what extent and under which conditions these lessons are transferable to other situations. In that case they can stimulate the debate in other countries and help committed people in these countries in their research to find a DwP-approach adapted to their specific situation.

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# CAN WE TALK ABOUT PEACE-BUILDING OR 'DEALING WITH THE PAST' IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ISRAELI PALESTINIAN CONFLICT TODAY?

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When the Center for Peace Studies in Zagreb invited me to speak at the conference 'the Role of Youth in Peace-building Process' I immediately accepted. After all, in my work with young people in political education, we do strive to promote the values of equality and peace. However, the title of the conference as well as the title of the panel I was to participate in, 'Youth and Dealing with the Past', were inaccurate in a way that I had to start from thinking critically about the words practitioners and academics use when speaking, working and writing about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## Thinking about "Peace-building"

I first argue that at present, we cannot even make use of the term peace-building in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After the 1993 signing of the Oslo Agreement, the word peace was overused to the extent that it sterilized and even de-politicized the process that was supposed to result from Oslo. Everyone wanted peace, everyone claimed they were working for peace, and the word was quickly emptied of its meaning and political connotation. Even today, local and U.S. policymakers as well as practitioners and academics refer to the need to bring the parties together as to the need to 'revive the peace processes. I think it is time we reject this discourse – defined in West Jerusalem and Washington DC – for a better choice of words.

As a consequence of the Oslo Agreement, endless initiatives and projects categorized as 'Education for Peace' projects were begun in Israel. Donors were eager to support people-to-people projects and the 'NGO-ization' of the 'encounters business' reached its peak in the second half of the 1990's. By the time the second Intifada began there were hundreds of initiatives (mostly run by Jewish directors) to bring Israelis and Palestinians together, from elementary school kids to high school teenagers to teachers and university students alike. The practice of such initiatives and various projects has been well researched and discussed among scholars and reflective practitioners, among whom the difference in approaches taken when working with groups in conflict, largely in terms of the methodology and models applied, remains a point of contention. I differentiate here between two types of encounters: the contact hypothesis approach and the inter-group encounter approach.

The contact hypothesis approach focuses on the encounter as an aim in and of itself. Such encounters are sometimes referred to by some practitioners as 'Humus Encounters' as they marginalize or even disregard controversial issues that are at the heart of conflicts. In contrast, the inter-group encounter approach tends to highlight the encounter as a political one and treats encounters as a means to a goal rather than an end in itself. It aims to evoke critical thinking among participants and to challenge the status quo and the asymmetry of power relations between the occupier and the occupied.

Those of us who facilitated inter-group encounters in the 1990s never referred to our work as 'peace-building' but rather saw our work as political education. We aimed to promote social change and to challenge the dominant discourses, political denial and absence of citizenship and basic human rights for Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank as well as inside Israel. Peace-building was a term imported from the field of Conflict Resolution as established in the United States. Perhaps we aimed at transforming the conflict, but not at resolving it.

Until 2000 we were able to work, conducting workshops and exchanges, in both in Israel proper and in the West Bank and Gaza. But even then, in the post-Oslo years, the occupation was never over and structured violence was still apparent everywhere to those who chose to see it. For example, while Palestinians needed permits to enter Israel proper and crossed checkpoints in order to do so, Israelis were enjoying freedom of movement as the lords of the land. After 2000, such encounters were no longer feasible as the Israeli occupation only became more aggressive and fierce (and continued inside Israel mostly between Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel or abroad, between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians from West Bank [while Gaza remains almost sealed for exit or entry of its inhabitants]).

The process that never began following the Oslo agreements is the process of ending the control of one people over another; ending the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian people; ending the process of ongoing humiliation, overuse of power and human rights violations. The real meaningful 'peace activism' of Israelis today is in the form of activism against the Israeli occupation and should not be characterized as peace-building but as anti-occupation activism. This activism takes different forms: from the Friday joint demonstrations of Israelis and Palestinian in Bilin, to the refusal to serve in an occupying military (not limited to the refusal to serve in the occupied territories only); from civil initiatives to the de-militarization of the minds of young graduates of the Israeli education system, to efforts to educate young people to think for themselves – to think critically, to choose to know, to want to know.

### **Thinking about “Dealing with the Past”**

If we think of encounters between groups in conflict as directly related to peace-building efforts, such encounters in the former Yugoslavia do deal with the past as they offer participants a way to deal with the legacy and memories of the wars of the 1990's. Encounters between Israelis and Palestinians however, do not 'deal with the past' in the same manner. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, participants in such encounters still face the present reality, which is violent, unequal and distorted. The past, referring to 1948 (the creation of the state of Israel/The Nakba or Palestinian Catastrophe) as well as other events, is being contested in the present-day as part of an on-going competition over narratives and memories, victimization and other such processes related to the dynamics between groups in conflict. In this sense, 'dealing with the past' in Israel-Palestine is constantly being challenged by the present.

The concept of 'dealing with the past' – even if never referred to by that term – was and still is present as an important component of encounters between Israelis and Palestinians. The competition over victimization is a fascinating and multi-layered one and is also present among members of many other groups in conflict. It surfaces around issues such as 'who suffered most', 'who are the ultimate victims' and 'who is more human'. In encounters, such competition brings up the Jewish Holocaust within minutes of conversation. In this process, there is usually a strong demand from the Jewish participants for the Palestinians to recognize the Jewish Holocaust as a unique and incomparable historical event, as well as the exceptional Jewish suffering and fears of existence that such a past has created. The Palestinians, however, request not only recognition but acknowledgment of their Nakba (Catastrophe) from those they hold responsible (who are present at the encounter). In such encounters, the Pal-



estonian participants either compare their suffering to that of the Jews in the Second World War, completely negate the memory of the Jewish Holocaust, or argue about numbers or details, posing such questions as 'why do we have to pay the price for the crimes of others (the Nazis and Europe)?'. The Jewish participants, on the other hand, refuse to recognize their role in the displacement of Palestinians from their native lands or their position of power and privilege within the current state of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This comparison raises a number of challenges: While the Jewish Holocaust ended more than six decades ago, and is currently an historical event around which national and international communities have come together in acknowledgement and a commitment to recognizing, the oppression and occupation of the Palestinian people at the hands of the Israeli state is still ongoing. As an internal process within each of the groups, throughout the encounter, the Jewish narrative of the Holocaust is fixed, adhered to by all Jewish participants, and subjectively understood by the Palestinian participants. The Palestinian narrative, on the other hand, can be understood as a fragmented narrative in which Palestinian voices point to a common experience but each participant is only able to partially recount the narrative. While competition over who is the ultimate victim is a real experience, it is implicated in discourses of power which mask the reality that exists outside of the facilitated encounter: the power relation between occupier and occupied.

### **Final Remarks**

In reflecting on the role of youth in Peace-building processes or in anti-occupation activism in Israel and Palestine, I emphasize here the reality and challenges faced by young Israelis and Palestinians as significantly different. I emphasize here the difference between the occupiers and the occupied, between standards of living, freedom of movement, the right for self-determination and many other daily practices as reflecting the imbalance of power between Israelis and Palestinians.

The main problem for young Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza today is in the fact that the only way they can envision a prosperous future is one outside of Palestine, away from home, from the Israeli occupation and from the internal Hamas-Fatah conflict. Unfortunately this is the dream of too many young people.

Young Israelis on the other hand are allowed to envision a future. However, as young Israeli men and women begin their military service right after high school, their ability to think critically and their engagement as citizens only begins years later, unless they manage to be exposed to alternative circles and thinking early on, and refuse their military service at the age of eighteen. Young Israelis are raised to think of Palestinians as inferior to themselves, as the last war on Gaza and the aggressive overuse of power by the Israeli army demonstrated only too well. Peace-building, therefore, seems like a distant – and almost irrelevant – concept for young people in both societies.

# WHEN DOES CHANGE BEGIN? REFLECTIONS ON PEACE- BUILDING AND NON-VIOLENT ACTION

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In February 1943, after several days of interrogation and a show trial that mocked every imaginable standard of justice, three German university students were summarily executed for treason. For some months, they had been seeking to open the eyes of their indifferent society to the criminal nature of the Nazi regime. The three were members of the 'White Rose' resistance movement – and one of these Munich University students, Sophie Scholl, was only 21 years old at the time. Sophie and her fellow students had been involved in a campaign of what we might now call non-violent awareness-raising – chiefly through graffiti on public buildings and the covert distribution of leaflets aimed at waking their fellow countrymen and women from what they described as their 'dull, stupid sleep'. A bold attempt to place such leaflets in a central university building had been their downfall – when a janitor working in the building discovered them in action and instantly called in the police. In the first of their leaflets, during the summer of 1942, the students had declared that '...every individual must...in this last hour, resist as much as possible, work against the scourge of humanity, against fascism and all similar absolutist state systems. Practice non-violent resistance – resistance – wherever you are...before it is too late'.

The 'White Rose' was certainly not a mass movement, although the hope of this small group of about a dozen students and their academic mentors was that their colleagues in universities across the country might eventually be persuaded to join them and speak out against the destructiveness of the Nazi project. But we need to remember that in a society subjected to the most intense, relentless propaganda, it is perhaps not surprising that the vast majority of German university students at this time were enthusiastic supporters of the regime and its aggressive military aims. To question the regime's moral authority, to speak out against its policies, and to encourage others to openly dissent and resist – all these were actions that carried with them the harshest possible penalties. To express such sentiments - even to an individual who felt a degree of sympathy with such positions, or with one's family, friends or colleagues - was to risk everything. Very few persons were willing to take that chance.

If we look then at what Sophie Scholl and her fellow-resisters were aspiring to achieve – and the massive odds against them in 1942 and 1943 – it would be all too easy to conclude that they were at best unrealistic, naive, or just plain crazy. Any sensible assessment of their strategy for non-violent action would quickly judge these efforts to be futile, pointless - suicidal even. What could this group of idealistic young people possibly hope to accomplish with their limited circulation of self-printed leaflets and their defiant slogans painted onto university buildings – except the condemnation of their peers and their compatriots, and ultimately, their own deaths? Today, we can imagine a prospective supporter or funder presented with such a proposal instantly asking Sophie and her fellow 'White Rose' members what their success criteria might be – and how they could ensure verifiable outcomes for their dangerously subversive campaign of non-violent action in a society totally saturated in violence?

To any rational human being, the outcome of their actions in February 1943 would have to be judged a complete failure. This small band of young people had been swiftly and brutally silenced by a regime determined to eradicate any trace of their ideals or their initiative. And their fellow students at the university made certain that the authorities could remain confident that they shared this disgust with the 'White Rose' and everything it stood for – that the contamination of their opposing views and call to non-violent resistance had not spread to the wider student body. Immediately following the executions in February 1943, an 'Expression of Loyalty' meeting was held by the students at the university – where the janitor who had caught the resisters in the act of distributing leaflets was presented as the hero of the day. The resisters were dismissed as 'typical outsiders' – a group of misfits whose 'criminal activities are not characteristic of students generally'. The students were determined to send a clear message to the authorities: 'You can be sure. We are not like these traitors to our homeland.' End of story. For all intents and purposes, the 'White Rose' movement becomes an obscure footnote in the fatherland's glorious history and its unstoppable progress toward victory – despised, crushed, forgotten.

But does the story really end with this grotesque spectacle of conformity? Were the actions of the 'White Rose' movement really a complete failure? If you visit Munich today and seek out the university there – you will find yourself standing in a large square in front of the main building of the campus (the very building where Sophie Scholl and her brother were arrested) that is now named after these two young resisters. Indeed, memorials celebrating the 'White Rose' movement's actions can be found throughout Germany. This brave group of students – condemned, executed and meant to be forgotten forever – is regarded as examples of outstanding moral courage and witnesses to the highest values to which contemporary Germans should aspire. In 2005, an award-winning film, 'Sophie Scholl: The Last Days', attracted large audiences world-wide to the story of the 'White Rose' movement for the first time. What looked like the end of the story – oblivion, in fact – in 1943, certainly looks very different today. The near-unanimous rejection of these young people by almost everyone in their community has been transformed into a near-unanimous regard for them as models of committed, responsible citizenship.

What the remarkable story of the 'White Rose' reminds us is that it is sometimes extremely difficult to recognize the full significance of non-violent action in our own lifetimes – or to understand in the short-term just how valuable our modest contributions to struggles to confront militarism or to build peace might be. The story of the 'White Rose' is an especially dramatic one, to be sure – but it can nevertheless help us to reflect on how we understand our own struggles in the face of great obstacles – and to explore definitions of what counts as "success" or "effectiveness" in various forms of witness and action. What does a "successful" peace movement look like? What can be learned from apparent "failure?" Do we require detailed models for non-violent social and political change to be "effective" – or is the unchanging testimony to a set of values the most important factor in peace work? What can the movements of the past teach us about sustaining commitment and vision over many years – and through many setbacks or defeats?

Consider also the lives of those two towering non-violent thinkers and activists of the twentieth century, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. Through Gandhi's *Satyagraha* campaigns in India during the 1920s, 30s and 40s and through King's leadership of the American civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s, these giant figures made profound contributions to our understanding of both the potential and the limitations of non-violent action. Today, they are both revered as indisputable moral and political heroes in the countries of their birth. King's birthday is a national holiday in the United States and Gandhi is celebrated as the father of the Indian nation. It would be very easy to assume from the way in which both of these individuals are often pre-

sented to us in the present that their lives were challenging, difficult, but ultimately triumphant progressions toward immortal greatness. We could easily be led to believe that both these men had a unique ability to articulate near-perfect strategies for social and political transformation and to pursue them with immense confidence, determination and endless energy. That's sometimes how the stories of such monumental historical actors sound to us today. I often wonder how many people today look at the extraordinary lives of Gandhi and King and say to themselves, 'I would love to be able to follow a similar path – but these were great men of truly exceptional gifts. I just don't have that kind of greatness – or unshakeable confidence – within me.'

But in their own lifetimes, the road to success – to real, lasting, non-violent social and political change was rarely so certain for Gandhi and King. In fact, both Gandhi and King spent much of their lives wondering whether they were actually having any impact at all in their societies and even among their own followers – perpetually questioning whether they were finally making any difference whatsoever. If you look at their stories carefully, it becomes clear that it was usually all but impossible in their own lifetimes for them to see the significance of the contributions they were in fact making. The revolutions they were creating were so rarely – if ever – wholly visible to them in the moment. Indeed, both men were frequently convinced that everything they had struggled for over the decades had only resulted in complete failure. Comprehensive accounts of the movements they inspired need to be as much about a sequence of what looked to Gandhi and King like defeats and withdrawals at the time – as they are about what we now consider historic breakthroughs and achievements.

For example, as India moved closer to its much dreamed-of independence from British rule – and the society descended into the most appalling communal violence, a heartbroken Gandhi was definitely not feeling himself to be the victorious figure he is sometimes held up to be today. 'I have never been in such darkness as I am today,' he wrote in December 1946. 'Today I am helpless...Today I have become bankrupt. I have no say with my people today. What I have said in the past has no value.' And in November 1947, he wrote, 'I have never been in such darkness as I am today...It is due to my limitations. My faith in *ahimsa* (non-violence) has never burned brighter and yet I feel there is something wanting in my technique.' Sounds familiar? Every peace-builder or non-violent activist today can surely relate to that kind of doubt!

Likewise, after what we would regard today as the successful outcome of the famous bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama in the mid-1950s, Martin Luther King, Jr. allowed himself little time for jubilation – and he was far from confident about what his next steps should be in the campaign against segregation and for the full equality for all African-American citizens. 'I need your help,' he told his friend, the musician and actor Harry Belafonte, 'I have no idea where this movement is going'. Later, reflecting on the strains that his commitment to non-violent social change had placed upon him, King was to say, 'I am tired of demonstrating. I am tired of the threat of death. I want to live. I do not want to be a martyr. And there are moments when I doubt that I am going to make it through...I do not march because I want to. I march because I must'.

Those incredibly honest words of King's – full of uncertainty and of immovable conviction, expressed at one and the same time – are echoed in rural Colombia today among the voices of courageous peace communities determinedly resisting the violence of government, paramilitary and guerrilla forces and creating alternative environments in which life can flourish. They are echoed in the words and deeds of Israeli and Palestinian peace activists who reject the bankrupt options of further militarization and entrenched hatred poisoning their respective societies. Are these people 'successes' or 'failures'? Are their remarkable efforts 'effective' or 'futile'? And who has the authority to draw such conclusions? I hope we can talk more about these astonishing witnesses to the power of non-violence in our own time as we meet here this week

– as well as about the legacy left to us by pioneers like Gandhi and King. Recognizing that the space in which we situate ourselves as peacebuilders today has in part been opened for us by activists and witnesses of the past can be an inexhaustible source of inspiration - and a vehicle for the development of the kind of long-term perspective so crucial for a lifetime of activism.

We all know, as Gandhi and King did, that work towards a non-violent transformation of society cannot happen overnight. Our task is a generational one – at the very least. There are generally as many setbacks and reversals to be experienced in our campaigns and movements as there are identifiable steps forward. The time it takes just to *begin* to build peace requires patience, persistence, and a capacity for sustaining our visions far into the future. And as funders, community leaders, journalists and other actors are so often pressing us to demonstrate precisely what we can achieve in a two or three year period – it’s all too easy for us to internalize a narrow understanding of what counts as effectiveness that has very little relevance for who we are as peacebuilders or the challenges we undertake. How can we make sure we aren’t permitting inappropriate criteria to be used to measure our worth as peacebuilders – by our communities, by donors, and even by ourselves? How can we better enable and support one another to think clearly about these dilemmas? What do we need to sustain our visions, our energies? In our discussions here this week, let us share our insights into these questions with one another – honestly and generously. You are all participants in a massive project of historical change – in the company of Gandhi and King, alongside the Colombian peace communities and non-violent resisters in Palestine. So let us always remember, as the Israeli peace activist, Yigal Bronner, has written: ‘We will never have the privilege of knowing what history will think of us. We cannot know. That, in fact, is the hope. We act, as we must, without ever knowing which of our actions and which of our words will make a difference. We cannot know at what point or points, in what hidden or subtle domain, change begins’.

## ADDITIONAL TEXT

# THE PALESTINIAN ISRAELI LOST OPPORTUNITIES

*Mr. Amer Hidmi & Ms. Nour Lidawie  
International Peace and Cooperation Center*

In the realm of conflict, no other ordeal depicts the picture as accurately as does the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The art of conflict within this 2-state state surpasses the conventional skills of sculpting. Slabs of stone witness the chiseled quarrels imprinted on its dirty texture. The creative dimensions of conflict inspired long ago portray neither reflection nor consideration whether these chronicles would enthuse future generations.

Along with the signing of the peace treaty at Versailles (28 June 1919), World War I had made grounds for a fierce worldwide conflict. Numerous other significant events were triggered, above all in the Middle East. The dissolution of the Ottoman Empire<sup>27</sup> set the scene at the end of the war. The victorious Allies (1918) took control of the Levant. By mandate from the League of Nations, France took control of Syria and Lebanon, and Great Britain of Palestine and Jordan. Had been "falsely" promised independence after the war, the Arabs were deeply disappointed.

On the verge of a bitter discovery, a crisis surfaced in Palestine. On November 2, 1917, before the war had ended, the British Government had published the famous Balfour Declaration that stated the following:

*His Majesty's government views with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people" with the understanding that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.*

The fulfillment of the promises of the Balfour Declaration was identified difficult by the British authorities, in fact, impossible. Violent demonstrations erupted in Jerusalem and other parts of the country during the late 1920s, and throughout the 1930s. Palestinian Arabs vehemently opposed the Jewish immigration into the country. In 1936, the British tried to appease the Arab population by placing a limit on the number of Jewish immigrants to be admitted into Palestine.

As soon as the Second World War was over, the situation in Palestine became grave due to the huge influx of Jews, escaped the Holocaust in Europe. Incapable of finding a resolution to the intensifying situation in Palestine, the British introduced the problem to the newly-organized United Nations Organization. At a meeting in Lake Success, New York (November 29, 1947), the United Nations General Assembly approved a partition plan for Palestine. Both the Arabs and the Palestinians rejected the plan, and formed volunteer groups that came into Palestine to thwart the implementation of the UN-sponsored Partition Plan.

The British, unable to maintain law and order, ended their Mandate over Palestine on May 15, 1948 marking the declaration of the birth of the State of Israel. Arab armies from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Transjordan, and Egypt immediately entered Palestine to aid its Arab population in their fight against the emerging Jewish state.

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<sup>27</sup> This had controlled the Middle East since the early years of the 16th century.



The Camp David Peace Accord between Egypt and Israel on March 26, 1979 had been signed. That event marked the first time an Arab country would recognize Israel and begin having peaceful relations with it. The Camp David Accord shattered the other Arab states to the foundation, continuing their resistance to any supplementary steps of peace with Israel. Arabs would not value the fact that by his action, President Anwar Sadat regained all that Egypt had lost during the devastating military and political adventures that had taken place during President Nasser's days because it was on the behalf of Palestine.

Five days after the American-imposed deadline -January 2, 2001- for responding to the Clinton Plan for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Yasser Arafat finally met with President Bill Clinton where the Palestinian side accepted the plan, Arafat said yes, then proceeded to reject crucial elements of it. Since the subsiding of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the outbreak of the second intifada, and the defeat of then-Prime Minister Ehud Barak by Ariel Sharon, participants and scholars have sought to assign fault for the diplomatic failure and the subsequent violence. Following was the failure of Camp David and the Palestinian rejection of the Clinton plan.

On December 23, 2000, Arafat accepted Israel's sovereignty over the central Jewish holy site in the Old City of Jerusalem known as the Wailing Wall but not over the entire ancient temple wall of which it is a part; he objected to Israeli use of West Bank air space; and he requested a different formula for dealing with Palestinian refugees. Only the refugee point seems fundamental. Barak gave Clinton a 20-page letter outlining Israel's reservations, some of them quite significant. Furthermore, in January 2001 Barak publicly rejected the Clinton plan's call for Palestinian sovereignty over the Haram al-Sharif, the Noble Sanctuary. This rejection was no less fundamental than Arafat's opposition to the refugee formula. Moreover, Barak also expressed reservations about Clinton's proposal on refugees. In hindsight, Israel's response to the Clinton plan probably benefited from a more politic presentation. Arafat agreed to the plan and simultaneously offered his reservations; Barak had the Israeli cabinet approve the Clinton plan and then, in a separate time and place, presented Clinton with its own list of reservations.

Despite this jockeying by both sides in early January 2001, high-level Israeli-Palestinian talks began a few weeks later, on January 21, in Taba, Egypt. The Taba talks were serious and largely based on the Clinton plan, according to Ross himself in an August 2001 interview ("What was done in Taba was basically to focus on the Clinton ideas") and according to the concluding communiqué issued by the high-level Israeli and Palestinian representatives at Taba (the "two sides took into account the ideas suggested by President Clinton together with their respective qualifications and reservations"). And the two parties reported unprecedented progress: the final statement from Taba, issued about ten days before Sharon trounced Barak in the Israeli elections, announced, "The sides declare that they have never been closer to reaching an agreement and it is thus our shared belief that the remaining gaps could be bridged with the resumption of negotiations following the Israeli elections."

After Taba ended and newly elected Israeli Prime Minister Sharon chose not to resume the talks. Despite past failures, the parties<sup>18</sup> now know what it will take time to come to an agreement if they are ever willing to re-engage. The Clinton plan sets out a framework for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the exact definition of the June 4 border is known to be the major sticking point for Israel with Syria.

In addition, the 2001 Oslo has commonly been thought of as a failure, and it certainly was in the sense that it did not conclude with a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian

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<sup>18</sup> Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian fronts.

conflict. Without Oslo, however, the two populations would not have been as committed to a two-state solution as they are today. It is telling that one of the central critiques today of the Oslo process is that it was too gradual and allowed too much time for procrastination, bickering, violence, and suspicion. The two sides should have moved to resolve core issues like Jerusalem and Palestinian statehood much earlier.

So far, three months into the Obama administration, there is little evidence that Obama is ready to speak frankly. The international reaction to Israel's Gaza assault was like the reaction to some kind of natural disaster - as if no human hand had had a role in the destruction and nothing but money and aid was required to resolve the problem, and as if the disaster had not been "created by the state of Israel to annihilate the Palestinian resistance and Palestinian society."

Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton speak earnestly of the "inevitability" and the "inescapability" of a solution based on two states, without regard to the growing impossibility of a real Palestinian state or to the fact that Israel is killing off any prospect for such a state and is in fact openly killing off the Palestinians. The early months of the administration, and the appointment of George Mitchell as special Middle East envoy, are bringing out others who, more enamored of the process than of any prospect of genuine peace, blindly pursue the "peace-process industry" regardless of realities on the ground or the virtual guarantee of failure.

Probably the most detailed plan purporting to lay out a path toward a two-state solution was actually written before Obama took office and is only now being publicized. This plan -- entitled "A Last Chance for a Two-State Israel-Palestine Agreement" -- was drawn up in December by a group of well meaning U.S. elder statesmen, including Brent Scowcroft, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Lee Hamilton, and Paul Volcker, the only one of the ten to enter the Obama administration. The elders were drawn together by Henry Seigman, a former head of the American Jewish Committee and scholar of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict who has distinguished himself in recent years by his frank, realistic criticism of the Israeli occupation.

The proposal is a 17-page blueprint for achieving the impossible. It approaches the conflict from an Israel-centered perspective and indeed, by heavily emphasizing the need to meet Israel's security needs, contains the prescription for its own failure. The report devotes a remarkable one-fifth of its entire length to an annex on "Addressing Israel's Security Challenges," in addition to considerable verbiage devoted to this subject in the body of the document. There is no mention whatsoever of any need to ensure Palestine's security against threats from Israel.

The impulse behind this plan is admirable: it recognizes the centrality of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to other issues and U.S. interests in the Middle East; it urges that the new administration overturn the Bush administration's eight years of disengagement from the conflict and do so quickly; it calls for engaging Hamas; and it urges that the peace effort be undertaken even at the cost of angering "certain domestic constituencies." But the plan itself is naïve and oblivious to the brutal realities of the situation, which existed even before the Gaza assault. Because it takes no account of Israel's lethal intentions toward the Palestinians or its responsibility for the current level of violence, the report actually encourages Israeli intransigence while blithely assuming that this rigidity can be overcome by issuing a plan on a few pieces of paper while the U.S. continues to send Israel the arms necessary to destroy Palestine.

The report exists in a never-never land in which Israel has no responsibility for occupying Palestinian land and has concerns only for its own security but no obligations to the Palestinians. The report refers repeatedly to the "chicken and egg" security situation in the occupied territories -- as if it cannot be determined whether Israel's occu-



pation or Palestinian resistance to it came first, as if the occupation is not the reason for Palestinian resistance, as if the Palestinian suicide bombings that the report says cause Israel “understandable anxiety” might have arisen out of nowhere rather than precisely out of Israel’s oppression.

The plan addresses the requirements of peace between the two envisioned states almost solely in terms of Israel’s needs -- not only its security needs, but its settlements needs and its concerns about Palestinian refugees’ right of return. For instance, while it calls for the border between the two states to be “based on” the lines of June 1967 with only minor reciprocal modifications; it recommends that the United States “take into account areas heavily populated by Israelis in the West Bank.” Although the language minimizes the magnitude of this issue, this passage means that accommodation must be made for major Israeli settlement blocs, which include approximately ten percent of the small Delaware-sized West Bank, cover virtually the entirety of East Jerusalem, and include fully 85 percent of the 475,000 settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

This proposal also gives away the Palestinians’ right of return. Although it gives a nod to the refugees’ “sense of injustice” and calls for “meaningful financial compensation,” it declares, again unilaterally and pre-emptively, that resolution of the refugee problem should “protect Israel from an influx of refugees” -- meaning that the right would not be available to all or even most refugees who might choose to return to the homes and land inside Israel from which they were expelled. This provision would “protect” Israel from any requirement that it rectify the massive injustice it perpetrated in 1948 and would require that the victims be satisfied, after 60-plus years, with a little money and a home somewhere outside their own homeland.

The major element of the elders’ report proposes that the Palestinian state would be non-militarized and would be policed by a U.S.-led, UN-mandated multinational force that would function for five years but would have a renewable mandate, the intention being to permit Palestinians to control their own security affairs (and of course be able to guarantee Israel’s security) within 15 years. The force would be a NATO force supplemented by Jordanian, Egyptian and -- amazingly enough -- Israeli troops. The Alice-in-Wonderland aspect of this particular proposal is the elders’ assumption that Palestinian sovereignty would somehow be respected even as the Palestinians were being forced to turn their security over to a multinational force that included not merely elements of multiple outside armies, but troops from the very oppressor the Palestinians are presumed to have just shed by attaining statehood. This is the kind of “peace-process industry” nonsense that renders proposals such as this utterly meaningless.

The proposal gives away, before negotiations have begun, more than any state-to-be could ever possibly afford to give. It cedes territory in what would be the Palestinian state before Palestinians are even able to sit down at the negotiating table. It cedes, without cavil or apology, the Palestinians’ right to redress of a gross injustice that is, and has been from the beginning 60-plus years ago, the fundamental Palestinian grievance against Israel. It cedes Palestinian sovereignty and security by inviting in an international security force including troops of precisely the occupying force that the Palestinians seek to be rid off. And it cedes any viability in the new so-called state.

The elders who composed this document should know better. Some of them have actually worked as specialists on the Arab-Israeli conflict in the past, and the proposal’s convener Henry Siegman has been working on this issue for decades. But the proposal exhibits so little understanding of the extent to which Israel has already absorbed the West Bank into itself that it would appear that none of these individuals has ever even visited the region. Nor, in its blithe assessment that it will be possible to induce

Israel to agree to any withdrawal at all from the occupied territories, is there much understanding that no Israeli government of any political stripe, and particularly none of the rightwing governments that have led Israel for the last decade and more, has any intention of permitting the Palestinians any degree of true independence and sovereignty anywhere in Palestine.

Finally, just like the donors' conference that treated the Gaza disaster as if some natural force beyond human control had descended like a hurricane on the territory, this proposal gives no sign of recognition that Israel is the responsible party in this conflict. Israel is the party with all the power, controlling all the territory; Israel is the party that is in occupation over the Palestinians, in defiance of international law; Israel is the party that demolishes homes, bombs civilian residential neighborhoods, drops white phosphorus on civilians, imposes checkpoints and roadblocks and other movement restrictions, builds walls to close off Palestinians, blocks imports of food to an entire Palestinian population, confiscates land to build settlements and roads for Israeli Jews only. Israel is the party that has carried out 85 percent of the killings in the conflict since the Intifada began eight and a half years ago. When the history of this period is written, Abunimah said, "Gaza will be seen as the moment after which it became impossible for Israel to be integrated into the region as a so-called Jewish-Zionist state."

# CONFERENCE AGENDA

Conference "THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN PEACE-BUILDING PROCESS"  
Terme Jezerčica hotel, Donja Stubica, Croatia, March 24<sup>th</sup> -27<sup>th</sup> 2009

**March 24<sup>th</sup> Tuesday**

*Morning session*

**Protocol speeches:**

Representative of Centre for Peace Studies **Ms. Cvijeta Senta**  
Representatives of partner organizations: **Ms. Emina Bužinkić** – Croatian Youth Network  
**Mr. José Ángel Romo** – Spanish Youth Council  
**Ms. Tanja Petrović** – Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past  
Ministry of Family, Veterans Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity – **Mr. Adanić**  
President of Republic of Croatia – **Mr. Stjepan Mesić**

**Introduction to the topic:**

'Youth and Peace-building' – Center for Peace Studies (**Ms. Emina Bužinkić**) and Spanish Youth Council (**Mr. José Ángel Romo Guijarro**)

*Afternoon session*

**I. CONFLICTS**

'Challenges And Conditions For Effective Peace-building'

**Mr. Arno Truger** Austrian Studies Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution

**March 25<sup>th</sup> Wednesday**

*Morning session*

**'Role of youth and youth NGO's in dealing with conflicts'**

Examples of: EU – Spanish Youth Council – **Mr. José Ángel Romo**  
MED – Jeunesse et Non-violence – **Mr. Abdalhadi Alilja**  
BALKAN – Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia – **Ms. Maja Stojanović**

Discussions in small groups:  
Conflict management / Conflict resolution / Prevention of conflicts

*Afternoon session*

**Recommendations for peace-building education curricula**

**Ms. Lovorka Bačić** and **Ms. Emina Bužinkić**  
Workshop and discussion on best practices

## March 26<sup>th</sup> Thursday

### Morning session

#### II. DEALING WITH THE PAST

Youth and dealing with the past in Post-Yugoslav countries – **Ms. Vesna Teršelič**

Youth and dealing with the past in Western Europe – **Mr. Nicolas Moll**

Youth and Dealing with the Past in Mediterranean world – **Ms. Orli Fridman**

Discussions and presentations: Balkan and Euromed

### Afternoon session

#### III. PEACE-BUILDING

**When Does Change Begin? Reflections on Peace-building and Non-violent Action**  
**Mr. Brian Phillips**

Participation in the Human Rights Film Festival, Zagreb

**Discussion** "Human rights in Gaza – position of a victim as a justification for crimes"

## March 27<sup>th</sup> Friday

### Morning session

Workshops:

**Peace – building as a lifestyle**; facilitator **Ms. Emina Bužinkić**, Croatian Youth Network and Mr. Brian Phillips

**Mediation in local community**; facilitator **Ms. Sonja Kersten** and **Mr. Igor Đorđević**, Centre for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights Osijek

**Peace – building Public Policies**; facilitators **Mr. Gordan Bosanac** and **Ms. Andrijana Parić**, Centre for Peace Studies, Zagreb

### Afternoon session

**DRAFT DECLARATION**

**Conference Closure**

CONFERENCE "THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN PEACE-BUILDING PROCESS"  
 Terme Jezerčica hotel, Donja Stubica, Croatia  
 March 24<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> 2009

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