Network News
Spring 1995

This is the first of what we hope will be a regular newsletter to keep members and others interested in the Committee informed of activities of interest to all of us and to expand our contacts with those doing similar work elsewhere in Europe and beyond. Since its formation, the CCCRTE has been associated with a dozen different groups and peace organisations, mainly in the former Yugoslavia, some of which were initiated as a result of Committee work in Osijek. Very many members of these groups have been to or given workshops in other groups and in other countries. It is also encouraging that there is now a considerable traffic, though often not a very easy one, between Croatia and Serbia, and between former Yugoslavia and the rest of Europe. Partly because of the involvement of the Committee, there are now many more people in Yugoslavia capable of coping constructively with situations of violence and anarchy, and of helping others to do so. We have also helped define and to disseminate beyond the former Yugoslavia some appropriate methods of training for this work. Several members have given workshops in the North Caucasus and, in recent weeks, the Committee agreed to support Roswitha Jarman’s ongoing work in the region.

However, we cannot be complacent when so much work remains to be done. The whole area of Bosnia, where an enormous need has now grown, is virtually untouched. The conflict could well spread to Kosovo, Macedonia, and beyond to other areas of the Balkans. There is the simmering conflict, apart from the incandescent Chechnya, in the North Caucasus, and of course in Nagorno-Karabakh.

Clearly, there is an urgent, continuing need for conflict resolution training and communication of developments in that training among those providing and receiving it. We hope this newsletter will make some contribution to keeping those lines of communication open.
Clem McCartney
The CCCRT study visit to Northern Ireland by peaceworkers from the successor states of the former Yugoslavia took place as planned from February 21 to March 3. At the outset, the participants were given draft evaluation forms to think about during the course of their visit. At the end of the visit they were able to suggest modifications and each person completed the revised form. Rob Fairmichael, from Belfast, summarised and commented on them.

Eight participants took part, as planned. In many ways it was an ideal number as logistics were easier and the group was able to establish good personal rapport. On the other hand it, was a pity that more could not benefit from the programme. Very few participants had previously met any of those who came from other republics.

The group was made up of three from Croatia, one from Bosnia and four from Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), including one from Vojvodina. It was disappointing that there were not more from Bosnia and no one from Macedonia or Kosovo, especially as one funder would have increased the grant to meet the extra costs. A person from Kosovo was refused a passport and a person from Macedonia pulled out when they realised that they would have to travel to Belgrade or Bucharest to get a visa. This was doubly unfortunate because at a late stage another funder had agreed to award a grant for her costs and it could not be used for any other purpose. Perhaps someone with less overseas experience would have had more incentive to come and would have made more effort to get a visa.

The participants seemed to appreciate the programme. They were surprised that it was so comprehensive and that they met so many key people. It would have been better to send them the programme in advance but it was still being finalised up to the last minute and I didn't want to raise hopes which could not be met.

Perhaps most interesting was the reaction to meeting politicians and government officials. Many were ambivalent about the value of this, as they have a low opinion of such people. At the same time, a number said that it had made them think about their relations with such people in their home situations. For me, I felt that I had to introduce them to the full range of political perspectives to ensure balance. The meeting with the UK government officials was probably too intensive, with four sessions in one morning. We also intended that the evenings and the weekend be used to reflect and raise issues of concern to the group, but the programme was probably too intensive and the group seized every opportunity to meet people. As a result, we were often very tired for the review sessions and they were sometimes curtailed.

The group seemed to get particular insight by staying in four different residences with different ethos and programmes. I greatly enjoyed being with the group and found the whole exercise very worthwhile, mainly because the participants' experience in their own situations gave them a great deal of interest in work in Northern Ireland and an ability to look at it in a searching and critical way. They were able to cut through platitudes and they had what I found to be a healthy skepticism. On the other hand, the perspective they gained on Northern Ireland and the approaches of peace groups and others, seemed to have an immediate impact in helping them evaluate their own work. They felt that they did not have enough time to talk about their own situations and they wanted to do this in the presence of an outside person like myself, rather than on their own.
CCCRTE study visit
NGOs in a divided society
A summary of evaluation sheets

Rob Fairmichael

The programme was a comprehensive 10 or 11 day one with around 24 scheduled meetings with rather more than that in the way of individuals or groups. Places visited included Derry, Corrymeela (Ballycastle), Belfast, Dublin, Glebe House (Kilclief), Peace Farm (Coleraine). There was little or no free time -- "We hadn't free time at all." Several people would have welcomed more free time, one person suggesting, "We just needed one more day at the middle for us, to think about things we heard and to speak more about our situation ourselves." One person was relieved it was really about Northern Ireland: "I was just worried it is just a cover to actually work on reconciliation of ex-Yugoslavia people...so I am happy it was really a study trip of Northern Ireland."

For a group which did not necessarily know each other, there may not have been adequate opportunity to get to know each other as a team before being launched into the details of Northern Ireland. One person wanted an "introducing meeting" at the beginning. Another wanted "special sessions for the group only" and another again "more sessions of our group with Clem."

It is difficult in organising a comprehensive programme on Northern Ireland to avoid cramming in all the different facets which make it up. Sometimes a more impressionistic approach may need to be taken, which is easier said than done, as I know myself. Some people found too many meetings with the politicians, or the visit to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin, as not relevant. But it was also not a homogeneous group; some wanted more on peace education, some wanted less on education. There are only two possible ways to get around this and both have their own problems: 1) 'response programming' on a rolling basis which is difficult in asking someone to meet you tomorrow when they may not be free, or 2) dividing into smaller groups of three or four some of the time, according to interest. This also makes the logistics difficult; if you don't know the group's interests beforehand it's very difficult to plan optional programmes (what if people want to go to both options at a particular time?)

But overall the programme seems to have worked well and there were no dissatisfied customers at the end of the day. Critical comments on the same issue (as above about education), sometimes indicated different or opposing ways of resolution.

The focus
The fact of government funding for NGOs in Northern Ireland was an issue of importance for some, and one person felt it was not relevant to have "meetings with some large NGOs, which are, in some way (from my point of view) quasi-NGO." One person commented that "in practice, we had almost the same number of politicians as representatives of NGOs." Another would have liked information in advance about NGOs being visited to get more out of the short meetings with them -- maybe this could have been read in the mini-bus travelling there? The others seemed quite happy with the focus. One way around over-emphasis on the party political arena would have been to have had a session with short presentations and questions, or even this format according to the Pax Christi 'role-play'-model,
where locals role play party representatives. At one such session an indignant visitor who had missed the introduction explaining about it being a role play, wanted to know why the Sinn Fein representative was being ostracised!

Achievements/expectations
Responses here were uniformly positive: "I achieved much more than I expected" is positive, unless the original expectations were very low. Talking about NGOs, another person said "I achieved to know about their structure, problems, personal experiences and about a good cooperation between NGOs and governmental institutions." The simple statement, "I've learned a lot about Northern Ireland and about myself" indicates a very personal relevance.

On differences to expectations, one person had envisaged a conference and was pleasantly surprised. A couple of people didn't expect to meet so many political party and government representatives (they were being critical) -- though another person who made the same point about political representatives noted "their readiness to speak about peace." They also commented on the way it was organized -- "very informal, friendly and full of warmth."

More/less of things
Responses here are really dependent on individual interests, as indicated regarding education. One concrete suggestion was that there could have been 'some comparisons with our situation, or dialogues with people from professions involved in conflict. Or presentations of some case studies, detailed presentations of some concrete conflict, and role of different sides in it (e.g. hunger strikes, 'Bloody Sunday')." Other suggestions were for more practical visits "like it was in a school in Londonderry," "workshops in conflict resolution with Northern Irish groups of children or adults from different communities," "more about the techniques of communications and cooperations", "more lawyers, human and minority rights experts", "more about work with children", "longer time with people working on very grassroots level in cross-community relations." On the last point, a look at the work of one of the more dynamic Community Relation Officers locally might have been good, but to encapsulate all of these different interests would have necessitated another ten-day stay.

Clem had told me in discussion before the visit something to the effect that he felt they had had more than enough of theory and techniques. One person said that before arriving "I've imagined there might be some practical skills or methods, but now I realize that concerning the concept of the visit and diversity of the group's interests, it would have been quite inadequate and irrelevant." Nevertheless, some more direct connection with like-minded theorists working in an unlike situation might have been fruitful, if feasible, but that would have been a different programme.

Someone felt there were too many meetings in the day anyhow. One person felt that they were expected to know more about the situation in Northern Ireland than they did, so that papers before arrival or a general introduction at the start might have been useful. There was a request echoed by a few people for free time "useful for clearing up some points of meetings" or "to go through the materials we've got."

Most people felt the visit was about the right length. The evaluation questionnaire asked participants if they would have
...NGOs in a divided society

preferred to spend a couple of days in one organisation and not have such a range of visits; there were four "yes" answers; three people saying 'no' and one person felt it would have been difficult for such a heterogeneous group. No consensus there.

**Learning**
"What did you learn from your visit?" received the short response of "Are you joking?" from one participant, presumably at the prospect of attempting to summarise everything in less than three cms on a page. People did seem very pleased to have got hold of resource material they could use; I already knew that from meeting them and being involved in bargaining for some materials for them! One said, "I am happy for receiving books which shall be useful for establishing peace education centre."

Inevitably, different people focused on different things learnt; "many different ways in long-term cross-community work, influence that political culture can have on the peaceful life and mutual understanding in divided societies, cooperation between NGOs and government, peace education literature." Another said; "I found that people are not a problem. The problems are rigid attitudes of some leading politicians and their hidden system dirty activities with aggressive groups" -- strong stuff. One person learnt simply "More about the possible approaches to the conflict." Another felt it could be of use to start with some democratic initiatives, but first of all -- to advance the activities (and change the structure) of our own NGO." A few commented that they would be keeping in touch with other participants. One commented in upbeat fashion, "I have ideas for new projects. I will write articles for newspapers and magazines and become famous." Another said that there would be "so many things" to share with colleagues. I thought I had heard all the world's sayings about building bridges but I don't recall the one that says "You cannot build the bridge from the middle of the river."

**A mixed group**
One person differed from the rest as to how "mixed" the group was in interests and nationality; "I wish the group had been more mixed" is clear but does not indicate how the group wasn't mixed enough. Another comment was that "it was helpful in realising own national identity and stereotypes, to exchange experiences in peace- and community-building work, to see at the possibilities of peace links across the border." A specific comment was "the last lesson was the best for self respectation." Another said "interaction could have been better if we had more time and perhaps, few sessions of the kind we had last afternoon."

**Conclusions**
Many conclusions have already been mentioned and I will not repeat them here. One closing comment was "I regret that we haven't enough (official) time to speak about the situation in our country."

Perhaps one possibility here would have been to hold an information session in either Derry or Belfast which would have allowed the visitors to share on their work and perspectives, as well as a short panel of contributions and discussion, it could have taken a 'marketplace' format (say after a coffee break) so that locals interested in particular people's work could have talked more at a one-to-one level. Talking about their situation while in Northern Ireland might have helped the process of sorting out relevances and irrelevances in who and what they were meeting.
Rekindling hope

Diana Francis

Twenty-six trainers and educators from Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Baranja (UNPA east zone), Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia and Serbia met March 19-23 at the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution at Stadt Schraining, together with six outside trainers, to exchange experiences, ideas and skills and to offer each other friendship and support. The desire for such a gathering had been strongly expressed at the meeting held in Budapest 18 months earlier to evaluate the contribution made by outside trainers in support of peacemaking work in former Yugoslavia, and to identify needs and goals for the future. In the event, the importance of that evaluation was more than matched by the fact that the Budapest meeting provided an opportunity for peacemakers from different parts of a divided region to meet each other and to learn to know and trust each other, finding immense encouragement in the knowledge of all they held in common.

Both the Budapest and the Schlaining meetings were organised in the name of the CCCRTE from the secretariat at IFOR in Alkmaar. The coordination of planning and finding participants from within the region was done by the group MOST at the Anti-War Center in Belgrade and the Center for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights in Osijek. The final agenda was constructed at the beginning of the meeting, according to the expressed needs of participants and the things they had to offer. Different sessions were facilitated by different trainers, one from within the region and one from outside. This co-operative process was hard work to get started, but once underway served the group well in terms both of content and of the spirit of equality and cooperation which was the hallmark of this event.

Topics for sessions included power in conflict and victim, persecutor and rescuer roles; recovery and healing: reconciliation; handling inter-ethnic relations; non-violent communication; dealing with our shadow side; 'deep ecology', and networking and support. One of the two men from within former Yugoslavia had been working for two years in Pacrce, where outside volunteers are able to provide a bridge of communication between the Croatian and Serbian sides and help in the physical and social rebuilding of the divided town. The positive and practical nature of his experiences injected much needed hope into our discussions.
...Rekindling hope
One of the participants came from Tuzla, and halfway through the meeting information reached us of the breaking of the ceasefire with the shelling of her town. The impact of this news, the pain felt and expressed within the group, was immense. The participant concerned had already made an impassioned plea for training and other support for the work of the citizens' network in her area to uphold the values of tolerance and coexistence. Now her request was renewed with even greater urgency. (See box)

In our final evaluation, the words which came up again and again were 'contentment', 'satisfaction', 'fulfilment'. Participants felt that their deep need for nourishment and support had been met in their time together, giving them much needed strength for their continuing work in the face of fatigue, discouragement and danger. Our thanks to all those who by their hard work and financial support helped it to come about.

---

To those who carry the heavy responsibility of maintaining fragile peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Dear friends,

We are a group of over 30 non-violent conflict resolution trainers and educators who came together in Stadtschlaining, Austria to exchange experiences and develop our work of helping people find ways to resolve conflict peacefully. We come from Ljubljana, Zagreb, Pakrac, Zupanja, Osijek, Beli Manastir, Sombor, Beograd, Nis, Kotor, Pristina, Skopje, as well as from the Netherlands, England, Switzerland and Germany.

As we met, the terrible news burst upon us that the ceasefire in Bosnia-Herzegovina had been broken with the shelling of Tuzla. We are deeply shocked that once again people are being killed, and we are afraid that the war is beginning again and will spread.

As non-violence trainers, we in the last year alone have invested more than 50,000 hours helping people to learn how to resolve conflicts without violence. This is our contribution to peace in the region -- an aim we share with you.

We ask you to explore all possible ways and use all your courage in taking whatever steps you can to stop the killing. We are certain that a firm ceasefire is essential for hatred to decrease, and the space to be made for non-violent initiatives. There are many of us ready and willing to mediate, if only we can be given the opportunity. There is a growing non-violent movement of grassroots peacemakers -- citizens who can provide the foundations for a lasting peace. Please tell us how we can work together.

In peace,

Signed
Peacebuilding in the North Caucasus: A personal reflection

Roswitha Jarman
The former Soviet republics that lie on the northern slopes of the Caucasus mountains and stretch from Adygea to Dagestan are known as the Northern Caucasus. Most people live in the flat lands north of the mountains. Mountain dwellers have, over the past 150 years, been persuaded to move to the lowlands.

Under the Soviet system, records of the Caucasian peoples were distorted and falsified. This has given rise to myth and competing claims to land and rights being made by different ethnic groups, which have caused anger and confusion and led to violence. Also under Soviet rule, Russian was the dominant language. Many children did not learn to speak their native languages. In the 1940s, Stalin deported complete national groups to Central Asia for allegedly collaborating with the Germans. The groups deported were mainly Muslims: the Karachai, Balkari, Ingush, Chechens, and the Buddhist Kumiks.

Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the republics have been given a certain amount of independence. A Confederation of Peoples of the Caucasus has been independently formed. In 1991, Chechnya, which had formed one republic with Ingushetia since 1934, decided to secede from Russia and become independent. A year later, Ingushetia broke away from Chechnya to remain in the Russian Federation.

Seeds of conflict
There are many potential reasons for conflicts in the region. Here are some:
* When, in 1957, the deported people were returned, many were settled in places which they did not consider their territory. In some instances, the returned people were made to feel like second-class citizens. The Ingush were not given back an important part of their ancestral lands;
* The deportees were stigmatized as having betrayed the Soviet Union to the Germans.
* There is little accurate information on the history of the peoples. Myths and rumours abound.
* Although some efforts are made to listen to each other and respect cultural differences, the tension between groups indicates that these are inadequate. There is competition for resources, unemployment is threatening. There is rising crime and what is seen as a mysterious and menacing mafia structure;
* The psychological adjustment to a completely new world causes tensions in all areas of life, while there is a race to try and modernize, to learn English, to gain access to the rest of the world, and not to be left behind;
* And there is a lack of knowledge of how to cope with conflict -- other than fighting it out.

In October/November 1992, a violent conflict lasting about 10 days broke out between North Ossetia and Ingushetia, with Russian forces being eventually used as peacekeepers. The result of this conflict was that about 1,000 people were killed, some 60,000 Ingush were deported or became refugees, and all their homes were destroyed. Ossetians suffered much fewer casualties and less destruction of property. No public inquiry as to the cause of the violence has been carried out. The North Ossetians blame the Ingush for allegedly launching the attack. The Ingush maintain that they responded to provocation from Northern Ossetians and that the Russian forces, instead of bringing peace, sided with the Ossetians and drove the Ingush from what they claim to be their rightful territory. The approximately 60,000 refugees in Ingushetia have suffered great hardship for over two years now. Some return of refugees to the disputed territory was interrupted with the outbreak of the war in Chechnya.
Conflicts resolution NGOs in the Caucasus

In the autumn of 1990 the Europe desk of Quaker Peace and Service (QPS), was asked to help with exchanges of people from the Northern Caucasus. This took the form of exchange visits to Northern Ireland to help them better understand the nature of internal conflicts. Once I and my husband, Peter Jarman, were established in Moscow, we made regular visits to parts of the North Caucasus. We also co-operated with and briefed International Alert workers and the World Council of Churches delegation to the Transcaucasus.

Local non-governmental organizations, as we know them, do not exist in the region. There are leftovers from Soviet times, such as a women's committee and a group of teachers for peace. There are also individuals who follow their particular interests. However, pressure groups or groups for alternative action are not really established. The greatest disappointment for me was to find members of one internationally sponsored human rights group in Vladikavkaz to be fascist in language and tone. There is a traditional loyalty to support your people right or wrong and fear and shame attached to being in the opposition.

What unites people?
* Pride in being Caucasian mountain people;
* A knowledge of ancient traditions and cultures, costumes and dances, chivalrous attitudes, honouring and respecting women in a male-dominated society;
* Respect for elders and their decisions;
* Honouring guests, being proud of the hospitality given;
* Codes of behaviour;
* Standing on the crossroads of Europe and Asia;
* The Russian language and common heritage of the Soviet Union;
* Having had to defend their land from both the south and north;
* Islam;
* Having natural grace and dignity.

What kind of peacebuilding may be helpful?
On the broadest scale it is important to get the world community involved. It is important that Western politicians speak out and try to communicate their concerns to the Russian government. It is also important that organizations such as the OSCE continue to monitor the human rights situation in the region and press for an end to abuses. It is also good to know that the Russian Patriarch has spoken with the Muslim leader of Chechnya.

Bearing in mind that there are tens of thousands of displaced and homeless people in the region, equal numbers of those who have been traumatized, bereaved or injured, that there is terrible destruction at all levels, that there is poverty and mafia activity, a clash of Muslim and non-Muslim cultures, a Stalinist heritage and backward social service structures, what can ordinary people do to help in peacebuilding?

I would suggest that there are a number of avenues:
* Support individuals and groups engaged in peacebuilding in the region;
* Listen to people and publish the truth as they see it;
* Live alongside people and offer training (English-language, psychological counselling, conflict resolution training, humanitarian help, medical and social assistance);
* Provide seminars to help develop indigenous skills. Focus those seminars on:
  - How to identify common ground;
  - How to facilitate meetings;
  - How to explore reconciliation, peace- and justice-building.

And in considering creative non-violence, there must be many more options.
About the CCCRTE

The work of the Committee -- training -- has had a variety of expressions and been carried out in differing manners. Members and associates of the Committee have run workshops, seminars, discussion groups or debates with organisations and individuals involved with peace, human rights, peace education, the well-being of refugees and displaced persons, the analysis and resolution of conflict, the care of those traumatized by violence, and those who are themselves involved in training in a variety of organisations. These have mostly been non-governmental organisations working for peace, non-violence, human rights and the relief of suffering, also university and church groups, in most areas of the former Yugoslavia. The majority of these have been in Croatia and Serbia (including Kosovo and Vojvodina), but also in Bosnia, Slovenia and Macedonia. In some cases the work has been prolonged and intensive, lasting two or three years and involving several CCCRTE members.

The results of all this work has been widely shared and evaluated with groups throughout the region. Members of the groups with which we have been working have also led workshops in Holland, Hungary, India, and in countries of the former Yugoslavia other than their own.

Most of the work has been sponsored and carried out by CCCRTE members resulting from decisions of the Committee. Some, however, has been done in collaboration with one of the member agencies -- for example the study by Peace Brigades International of Osijek. Yet again, some members of the Committee have worked as individuals on projects concerned with related or relevant issues but run by other affiliated agencies such as International Alert and War Resisters International, or have attended meetings of international bodies such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). We have also developed constructive relationships with peace groups in the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany.

We now form part of a large network of NGOs and other bodies working with a common peaceful purpose, but with slightly different though mutually consistent and supporting emphases of concern. Much of what we have learned and been able to pass on to others has been gained from our relationships with others. And we hope that we have been able to contribute comparably to them. We -- with several other agencies, national and international, and many organisations and individuals in eastern Europe -- have come to constitute a powerful collectivity for both education and action in the fields of peace, non-violence and human rights.

To help make this a practical forum for debating and refining training ideas, approaches, and specific skills, we urge you to contribute your own training experiences and to encourage others -- trainers and trainees -- to share their insights with us. Please send your correspondence to:

Coordinating Committee for Conflict Resolution Training in Europe (CCCRTE)  
c/o IFOR  
Spoorstraat 38  
NL 1815 BK Alkmaar  
The Netherlands  
Tel: 31 72 123014  
Fax: 31 72 151102  
E-mail: ifor@gn.apc.org

Network news was produced by David Lord of Conciliation Resources.

10 cccrte network news spring 1995