CHAPTER SIX

INTERCONTINENTAL WORKSHOPS

In Belgrade and Rostov I was working, in very different ways, with groups of people whose culture was different from mine, but not different from each other's. In the two workshop accounts which are given in this chapter, the participant groups comprised many different cultures, so that I was not alone (with my co-facilitator) in being different. On the other hand, the cultural variety within the group introduced new questions and provided new experiences of the challenges of cross-cultural facilitation. In the first workshop I had an interesting and positive experience of cross-cultural *co*-facilitation, which helped me learn about my own strengths and weaknesses. In the second workshop I was a participant, not a facilitator. We were all trainers, and the meeting had been arranged for us to share experiences and values as trainers from different continents. Both workshops brought to light important questions about history and power, and both, in different ways, gave me an extraordinary opportunity for exploring ideas, from different cultural perspectives, about what matters to people in conflict. They also gave me a chance to discover some of the different cultural considerations that contribute to the meaning of respect.

Both workshops were also, in different ways, very demanding. I had to work hard to examine my own sense of identity and locate myself in these groups, and in the world, as an inquirer, facilitator, theoretician and human being, in the midst of so much challenge and variety. There were also major organisational difficulties cope with, and I had to struggle with exhaustion.

I returned twice to the same church centre in Geneva, at a later stage in my research, when I was not longer writing full-scale accounts, to provide opening and closing workshops for the centre's annual fourteen week 'Graduate School' for church people, again from all around the world. I will follow my first full account with extracts from my journal of those later workshops, since they include some important insights which fit in best with this 'intercontinental' chapter.

GENEVA

This was the third major workshop that I facilitated in these first two years of my research. It was organised by an international and ecumenical church body, and the participants were all Christians of some variety. This was the first time I had facilitated such a broadly international workshop of this kind, and for that reason an incredibly intense time of learning. It was also a first in other ways. For instance, for the first time I chose, in consultation with my co-facilitator, to set out working assumptions at the outset (an idea I had learned from Jo in Rostov). It seemed a respectful thing to do: a way of sharing the power of understanding what was going on. In this workshop we emphasised our assumptions about experiential learning: from the experience of 'living with our differences'. Group dynamics and the role of facilitators constitute a major theme in the account, which records the shifting of power relations through the week, and the tensions among participants and between participants and facilitators. It is clear that my working relationship with George taught me a great deal about myself and about ways of carrying the facilitator role, as well as about culture, difference and commonality. The account still has the power to recall for me the intense emotions of that workshop: a salutary reminder of the degree to which my needs and motivations are present in the workshop, and the need for containment and reflexivity, as well as affirmation of my full-blooded presence.

This was the first occasion on which I used the 'stages' diagram (referred to in this account as the 'snake') as a frame for a workshop's agenda, and as an introductory mechanism to set out certain concepts and engage participants in thinking about their own conflicts. It was also the first time I used base groups as a vehicle for the distribution of power and responsibility, and for evaluation and feedback. (I think that was George's idea, based on his own experience.) Not so new was the issue of gender, which became central at a certain point in this workshop - this time for the group as a whole, rather than being, apparently, my concern alone, as it had been in Rostov. The question of whether or how to present or introduce discussion of nonviolence, as a fundamental value or philosophy, was in this religious context unavoidable. It has raised itself in different forms in subsequent workshops. The use of time was a bone of contention here, as elsewhere,

and represents for me an unresolved dilemma: how to balance rest and work, and to cover certain ground without too much pressure or density in the agenda.

The religious nature of the group certainly had an impact. In particular, the daily worship, organised and led by participants, drew them together. It was the expression of a common culture which transcended other cultural differences. In subsequent workshops arranged by the same church organisation, I have again worked in specifically Christian, trans-cultural groups, and it has been a powerful experience.

This account is extremely long and detailed. I have decided to reproduce it more or less verbatim, with the idea that to give one such detailed account will ground the reader in the moment by moment reality of what these workshops are like, in a way that generalised descriptions cannot. It also demonstrates in detail the nature and levels of my reflecting and recording - though the recording became much more selective in future workshops. A few minor editorial changes were made to the text, for clarification - for instance, the introduction of subheadings - in response to feedback from my supervisor and colleagues; and the explanation about the use of games was inserted. As with other accounts, I did not make other changes to the original text in response to feedback, since I wanted it to record the viewpoint I took and the responses I made at the given times of writing, weaving later reflections into the commentary. All names have been changed, as they have elsewhere.

NOTE: A different type face will be used for extracts from my journal. New commentary will be marked by square brackets.

Seminar held from August 5 - 14 1994 outside Geneva.

Account, notes and reflections compiled from my daily records of agendas and events, daily evaluations in plenary, feedback from base groups, evaluation done between my co-facilitator (George) and me, and my own journal writings.

Background

This workshop was organised by the an international and ecumenical Christian organisation in pursuance of its programme for 'overcoming violence'. It was intended for people working in all parts of the world, especially in situations of conflict and violence, for peaceful transformation, to give them an opportunity to share experiences and reflect together, to discover new ways of seeing things and acquire some new tools and skills.

I was at the original planning meeting and was invited to be the key 'trainer', finding such colleagues as seemed appropriate. In the event, after much thought and negotiation, I chose and succeeded in securing the partnership of George, a South African pastor from King Williamstown, who had been working for the Ecumenical Monitoring Programme in the run-up to elections in South Africa and was also a key member of his local Peace Committee. I think it would be useful to include here the text of a letter I wrote to him in February [six months before the workshop]. It demonstrates my approach to co-facilitation and to training, and my wish to be clear about both. It also indicates what I think I can and cannot offer as a trainer.

> *'Dear George,*
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> *As you know, I'm eager to secure you as co-trainer for this international workshop in early August. Peter and Anne [old friends and colleagues who had worked with George and recommended him to me] were quite clear with me that you would be an excellent colleague and described the preparation you have had and your own experience. I greatly respect their judgement and felt very happy to proceed on the basis of their recommendation. However, I quite understand your hesitations. I feel the same. I think, 'Who am I to do that?' Then I think that it is the people themselves who come together who will bring the experience and the wisdom. What the trainers have to do is to provide*

a framework, be responsive, facilitate a process; and maybe we are able to do that, with each other's support.

I have more reason than you to feel diffident. I come from a relatively very safe part of the world and in some ways live a very comfortable life. That doesn't mean I have nothing to offer; but it does mean that as co-trainer or co-facilitator I should work with someone from a very different setting, with a kind of daily experience, and therefore perspective, that I lack.

As I understand it, you have both a deep understanding of nonviolence and strong experience of the dilemmas and challenges of trying to live it in situations of both structural and interpersonal violence. You also work from a faith perspective, which will be important in the context of this church organisation; and you have training experience.

If we wished, we could decide to draw in other help; or we could decide to rely on the resources present within the group -which I am sure will be considerable.'

George, to my intense relief, agreed to work with me, and we had a delightful planning meeting at a conference of the church organisation, held in Northern Ireland, in June. It felt as if we had been working together for years. He subsequently told me that this time we had, working together on the planning, had given him confidence both in me and in his ability to work with me. We decided against the idea of bringing in 'experts' and did not subsequently regret our decision. The workshop participants, (twenty-two in all, of whom eight were women) came from every continent and brought an immense wealth of experience and understanding.

What we did bitterly regret was the fact that, in spite of all our clarifications to the contrary, the organisers sent out a letter of invitation describing the event as a 'training for trainers'. Some of the participants who came would have been excellent candidates for such an event, or were even over-experienced for that; others were at their first training ever. This confusion of expectations and mix of experience was to prove a major problem, especially in the first days of the seminar. As I wrote in my journal on the day George and I arrived at the centre,

'We were both horrified to know of 'experts' coming to the workshop, which is intended for those whose expertise lies elsewhere. Gradually we came clear that we have to function as planned, because that's what's best for the group. If anything is off track, it's the presence of these two (we didn't know at that time that there would be more); so we need to be clear with them what the workshop is about and who it was intended for and, if they see a

problem, to invite them to think how they'll cope. We also will do our best to value them as equal group members with a particular expertise.'

Opening session, Friday

Our first session, on the evening of Friday August 5th, was devoted to an official welcome from the organiser, introduction of the participants and trainers (first in pairs and then by each other to the plenary), and some scene-setting for the workshop as a whole. I explained that we would be seeing faith and practice as inextricably bound together, with our daily worship an important part of our programme; that we wanted the group to become a community of learning, using participatory methods and working in an informal and relaxed atmosphere; that the agenda we had outlined was therefore intended to provide a framework for the sharing of experience as the basis for the development of understanding, skills and commitment; and that the sharing of spiritual insights and resources would be integral to that process. The direct and immediate experience of living together as a group would provide a challenge to us all, coming as we did from very different cultures and lifestyles, and doubtless with some very different perceptions of the world. We would hope to discover much that was universal, but also to recognise, respect and even celebrate our differences.

In a quick brainstorm of words associated with conflict, painful associations at first predominated; but, with encouragement, participants produced many positive words as well. We wanted to establish that conflict is not only an inevitable but potentially a creative part of life. What matters is how we respond to or enter into it. The assumption made in the title and planning of the workshop was that we wanted to explore ways of doing so nonviolently.

We apologised for the confusion over the nature and intentions of the workshop, explaining that it would not be a 'training for trainers', though we hoped trainers would also learn from the whole experience.

George introduced the idea and composition of the base groups we had designed for support, evaluation and worship preparation, then went on to outline our planned daily time-table. This caused something approaching an uproar, being seen by many as overloaded. We re-explained our thinking, but also promised to reconsider, taking into account the many different preferences being voiced by participants.

(We did not explain at this stage, but might usefully have done so, that we had planned that our daily agendas would be interspersed with songs and games - partly to provide a change of dynamic: to help people relax after tense or difficult work, to wake up after lunch, to laugh after sadness; partly to help people experience themselves as whole human beings together - to 'bond'; sometimes to experience in symbolic or bodily ways things which had been matters of discussion - for instance the game called 'knots', where participants make a tight circle, close their eyes, reach out and find two other hands to hold, open their eyes and then try together to resolve the resulting tangled knot into one or two circles: a symbol of and exercise in co-operative problem solving. The games are usually quite short, often quite 'silly', and often involve a lot of movement and touching. They therefore require cultural and general sensitivity on the part of the facilitators: judgements as to what individuals and the group as a whole will be comfortable with. For instance, I was afraid our bishop might feel that 'children's games' were beneath his dignity, whereas in fact he loved them; which only goes to show, I suppose, that such judgements are hard to make. In any case, participants always have the right to 'opt out'.)

In our post-session evaluation, George and I agreed that things had gone well till we came to the revolt over the time-table. We felt we would have done better to describe the evenings as 'free but' rather than as 'work but'. We thought we had supported each other well, but that maybe we had fought back rather too hard over the agenda! Now we had to be prepared to make concessions. As I write this now, I realise with what a conflictual attitude we had all begun, the 'experts' and generally powerful characters in the group wanting to flex and display their muscles, and George and I wanting to be clear about our role and responsibility - and therefore, at this stage, our authority.

In my journal I wrote at 11.40pm:

> 'I think George and I dealt with the turmoil in a mutually affirming way, also respecting the views of the group, wishing to give the voiceless a voice, as well as hear those who have already spoken. (This by asking for feedback from the base groups after further discussion.) We've made a complete redesign for tomorrow morning, to respect the process and check more carefully how people respond to our overview of the agenda. Were people respectful to us? They were, on the whole, the quarter or so who were vocal; a bit strong in the case of the German (I had not learned names yet) - his words, that is, though his manner was light; others a bit gentler, but quite challenging; others helpfully supportive. No clear cultural influences. The German was disrespectful in talking while others were being introduced. Needs challenging if that continues. **(In the event, I did this much later.)'**

Saturday

On the Saturday, the first full working day, when we had gathered in silence, I began by introducing the 'snake' diagram, which we had used as the basis for our agenda outline. This diagram and explanation were received with enthusiasm, and many participants were quickly able to identify with the progression described by relating it to their own experience, locating themselves in the present at different points on the 'snake'. They made suggestions for additions and modifications to the diagram (which I had drawn on the white board) and I wrote them in.

In the second part of the morning, George invited participants to suggest, on the basis of some initial discussion in 'buzz groups,' what we all needed from each other to become a working community. From these ideas we agreed some mutual commitments. After a game, people then went off to do some group work, sharing their experiences of violence in its different manifestations. The learnings drawn from this process were reported back to the plenary, after a two hour lunch break, and I offered a definition of violence as whatever is done by choice which harms, oppresses or destroys, or which thwarts the natural fulfilled life of another being. I also introduced Johan Galtung's idea of the triangle of violence: direct, structural and cultural.

George went on to categorise possible responses to violence in three ways: to remain passive; to react with counter-violence; or to respond creatively, nonviolently. He asked participants to return to their groups to consider their own experiences of these three ways of responding and to try and identify some common characteristics of the third way.

After plenary feedback from that groupwork, we briefly evaluated the day, asking participants what they had liked and not liked, and what ideas or wants they had for future sessions. All had enjoyed the groupwork and some would have liked more time for it; the 'snake' diagram had gone down well and some would have liked more time for that too; the facilitation and participation had been felt to be good and the interpretation was appreciated. The heat had been very trying, but people thought we had all coped well. Some had enjoyed the long siesta, others had found it too long. Suggestions for the future mostly related to this last topic, though there was also a request for more theology and a proposal, vigorously countered, that the clergy should organise all the worship!

Each day closed with worship focused on a topic relevant to the day's work; so at this point we went off to the chapel, with the reminder that base groups were to meet after supper for further evaluation and reflection, and to report to us with feedback and suggestions. The person who was to have prepared this first evening was unwell, but other members of her base group put something together in a very satisfactory way.

Later, as we waited for the base group reports, George and I reflected that things seemed to be 'going OK'. There had been much positive feedback, especially on the first session and the 'snake', which seemed to have drawn in even those who had seemed inclined to be antagonistic. The reports from the base groups confirmed this impression. Participants felt we had worked hard to respond to their needs (one or two were impatient with all the demands and wanted us just to proceed according to our own plans), and most were content with the way the timetable had been arranged. Two individuals (who remained vocal throughout) wanted all afternoons free for sight-seeing, but they were strongly countered by others who wanted to work in the day and appreciated time for informal exchange in the evenings. The desire to have more time for everything was a recurrent theme throughout the seminar, and on this occasion one group expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of time allowed for plenary discussion. In fact our agenda had been eaten into by wranglings about time allocation, and we had been reluctant to lose content and had therefore perhaps tried to include too much, here and elsewhere.) Members of one group had felt that more equal participation in plenaries should be encouraged; also that it would help if some who were failing to do so could share real examples from personal experience, not just theories and generalisations.

My journal entry for that night reads as follows:

> 'People were very positive this morning after my introduction of the 'snake.' I think I earned their respect, and respected them by acknowledging their comments and incorporating them in the diagram. People's ideas about how we could become a real learning community included, strongly, ideas of respect, sensitivity and openness, and acknowledgement of differences while finding unity.
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> In practice, I find some group members less than respectful at times - rather strident/ clamorous in stating their needs and expectations, eg about days off as 'motivation'. I find it hard to respect that idea and don't even know that I want to. People who asked to come here I expect to have come for the workshop and its use/ meaning for them: I expect that to be their motivation, while I respect people's need for rest and re-creation.
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> We've taken all the feedback from the base groups - work well and thoughtfully done (with some fairly inconsiderate agenda-pushing mixed in) - and we're trying to acknowledge all

needs and wants and meet the most urgent, bearing in mind the needs of the seminar and its content. George and I have felt fairly overwhelmed by what has at times seemed like a clamour, but have received also good affirmation, thanks and care, and quality honest observations from some.'

Sunday

The following morning, Sunday, after silence and a song, I delivered, as George and I had agreed, a report on the feedback we had received from the working groups, thanking them for the quality of the work they had done and the helpful way they had reported it to us. I then explained the decisions we had reached and why: to offer an agenda with substantial chunks of group work preceded by plenaries, to stay with the time-table of the former day, and see, after one more evening's feedback, whether we could stay with that or would need to alternate longer afternoon siestas with free evenings, and to offer the whole day free on the Wednesday, cancelling the evening session which had been scheduled. I explained that this was a concession particularly to those who had expressed a wish for more time for sight-seeing, and that it was the only concession we saw fit to make. Most of the group wanted to focus on the work in hand. The church organisation had invited and paid for people on that basis and it was our responsibility to maintain that focus. Relaxation and informal exchange and friendship enhanced the work done in sessions, but a balance had to be maintained, and we hoped that what we were now suggesting achieved that balance.

This explanation and these decisions, which we asked the group to accept, were indeed accepted, I think with much relief by most, if not all.

We proceeded with a continuation in threes and fours of the previous afternoon's reflection on the characteristics of the nonviolent response. Many ideas emerged from this discussion, and some questions. In the subsequent groupwork and plenary discussion on the resources and inspiration for nonviolence in people's own faith and experience, these ideas and questions were further elaborated. The faith basis for nonviolence was clear to all - and the disastrous consequences of violence; but several remained doubtful as to the efficacy of nonviolence.

In the afternoon we went on to look at the methods of nonviolent empowerment: at group formation and the work of analysis which will need to precede action. First a model was offered for defining the injustice or violence which the group wishes to

remove, and identifying the things - or the actual people - which support it or kept it in place. (We used the example of a peasants' land struggle in Brazil.) Then we presented a model for planning a campaign to build solidarity, and one for setting goals for alternative processes and structures.

Next, participants were divided into groups to share accounts of situations of violence they knew, and choose one for a case study, using the models which had been presented. This work took us to the end of the session, which closed with a song and a brief evaluation.

The work content was felt to be evolving well and the time spent in groups had been greatly appreciated, both for the opportunity it had afforded for people to get to know each other, and for the chance to exchange experiences and insights and analyse participants' own situations. There was a feeling that some people had tended to dominate plenary discussions and regret that there had been no opportunity to discuss passive and violent responses to violence, as well as the nonviolent way.

After the evening's worship, and supper, George and I once more reviewed the day as we waited for the base groups to report. Overall we felt very happy. The groupwork we considered to have been excellent. We agreed to remind people to rotate the tasks of group facilitation and reporting.

What emerged from the base groups confirmed the points made in the earlier evaluation. Our responsiveness as facilitators had been appreciated, as well as our clear assumption of our role. The daily pattern was acceptable to almost everyone, and all were willing to go with it. The groupwork had given people a real chance to share feelings. Practical proposals were made about cold drinks, evening refreshments and workshop reporting; and an offer was made by one participant to present a case study of a campaign he personally had been involved in, using the day's models, in the following morning's plenary.

At some point during the day I had written in my journal, ' I realise how important communication is in fleshing out respect, as well as being an outcome of it. It's a great help here being able to talk with most people: the importance of language.' This theme recurred.

At bedtime I wrote,

'We've had a good day. Patience, intense work, intelligent weighing of differing needs, a will to balance responsiveness to wants with the requirements of the task and fair expectations of participants led this morning to a caring but assertive set of statements of intention which were accepted.

The respect which I see as at the heart of nonviolence was expressed here as 'love', emerging from faith reflection. That fits well with my own feelings noted earlier in this journal. The difficulties of remaining constant in nonviolence (ie sticking to nonviolence) are keenly felt by some participants. How can we (George and I) acknowledge that - give it time- while pursuing our agreed goal of focusing on the nonviolent option?'

Monday

The following morning, the Monday, after summarising the base group feedback from the previous evening and explaining our thinking about the coming day, we took the case study reports form the groups which had worked the previous afternoon, using the three models for empowerment. I told the story of one particular action taken by the Brazilian peasants whose campaign had been used as our original example: an action of outreach to the militia. Then the participant from the Philippines, who had offered the previous evening to do so, told the story of a group of village women he knew who had used the models to analyse their own case of having their fishing rights removed, and plan a campaign for their restoration. This first hand account of a lived example made exciting listening and wholly engaged the group. (I now see that if I had had time to consult with Ninoy before the previous day, this example would have been the one to use in the first place.) Key ideas in this session on self-empowerment by oppressed groups were the need for constant reaching our to the other and dialogue, for building solidarity and trying to shift the opposition; also the need to calculate costs and risks and to be tirelessly persistent. After coffee, participants returned to their groups to continue to work on their case studies: one on terrorism in Egypt, one on the continuing deforestation of Ethiopia, and one on the five hundred years of colonialism and the expropriation of land in Latin America. The task now, building on the analysis, was to set objectives and devise a plan of appropriate action for the initial stages of a campaign.

After lunch, siesta (or for some a shopping expedition) and a game, the groups went on to select a particular episode in one of their planned actions to test out in a role play, to gain some insight into the human dynamics of such action (including the feelings of the opposition) and a sense of the skills and resources that would be required by the

nonviolent activists. The groups returned to plenary too late to report on their action plans and their role plays, so reports were held over till the following morning and we went straight into evaluation. The participants had been really engaged in the groupwork and were generally tired and content. The interpretation which had made the groupwork possible was greatly appreciated. (One group at least had included language difference as a feature in their role play, both as a practical expedient at the time and because it was real for their chosen situation, where indigenous people were lobbying the ruling race (in Guatemala). (I realise 'race' is a taboo word, but can think of no other for this context.)

George and I reflected later that it would have been useful to have spent more time at the beginning of the workshop on group dynamics and helpful and unhelpful roles and behaviours of individuals in groups. (I don't remember what exactly gave rise to that thought). We noted that it would have helped the groups, when they were making their action plans and preparing for the role plays, if we had asked them to be sure they were clear who they were in the chosen scenario. We were greatly relieved and really delighted that the group which had had greatest difficulty at the stage of analysis (the Latin America group, which had had to use interpreters throughout) had really 'got into it' when it came to planning for action, and had done a wonderful role play - incorporating the language problem (see above). All the groups had worked through the entire task, experiencing their own difficult patches and blossoming at different points; and we had gone with the flow, supporting where necessary and stepping right out of things at other times. Our instructions had not always been closely followed, but had provided a framework for real engagement with real issues.

Feedback from the base groups supported this assessment. The extended group work had been greatly appreciated: the chance to follow something right through. There was some eagerness to be moving on to the 'conflict resolution' part of our programme and some concern that the programme for the following day now looked overloaded. Someone offered to present something in relation to 'dealing with stereotypes'. Satisfaction was expressed that our evening worship was integrated with the content of our work. A deepening sense of community was noted within the whole group.

In my journal that night I wrote,

> 'I think again in our facilitation today we respected our own agenda *and* the energy and direction of the groups.

> One interesting thing said by a Zambian to a South African (in an evening conversation over wine)was that it was not acceptable in his culture ever to remind someone of past favours or to look for gratitude. This was in reference to the economic sacrifices made by Zambia, and ordinary Zambians, in solidarity with the liberation struggle in South Africa. Zambians clearly feel patronised by South Africans, which from my observations they are. But the South Africans also clearly recognised the costly support they were given. They sang for Nelson (the Zambian) the song of gratitude sung by ANC people leaving Zambia to return home.'

I observed in myself some patronising feelings towards Nelson. I thought maybe they were a response to his, in European terms, 'baby face', and, in comparison with the other Africans, poor English (all deeply reprehensible in me); but when I really took the time to talk to him and came to like and respect him, I found he carried some post-colonial feelings and perceptions which were reflected in his demeanour and would tend to encourage patronising responses. He said, for instance, that in Zambia a trainer with a black face would not command enough respect to run a successful seminar. I was horrified and said that whereas I could understand how that might be so, until he and others could put that behind them they would never be able to take their real power and use it.

I also noted that the Burundi bishop, who had seemed so far a little stiff and, I felt, standing on his dignity, had loosened up, made some very good jokes and joined with enthusiasm in some very silly games. As the week went on, we were ever more aware of the pain and anxiety he carried for what was going on in Burundi. If we had been more aware in the first place, we could perhaps have supported him better from the start.

Tuesday

On the Tuesday morning George and I had decided to make space for the airing of doubts and difficulties about nonviolence: the debate which some had been wanting to happen. It seemed to us to make sense first to have a good look at the philosophy and methods of nonviolence. Now that we were coming to the end of this section on empowerment, we needed to come back to the unfinished business of doubts and obstacles before moving on. So after reports from the groups on their previous day's work, we invited participants to think how the work they had been doing related to their own situations, and to consider what were the obstacles to following 'Jesse's third way'; what kept people in passivity or drove them to counter-violence. We invited them to share their thinking first with two or three others.

The plenary discussion which followed was long and very heavy, taking the rest of the morning. The pain and despair in the group were almost palpable and we seemed to be going down and down. I felt very diffident about intervening, but there came a point when I felt we needed some reference point outside our present pit, and spoke in recognition of the pain, but also for hope: for what Adolpho Perez Esquivel [Nobel Prize Winner from Argentina] calls 'relentless persistence', for starting small, for Luis Aguirre's [a Uruguayan colleague's] 'seamless garment' of the world-wide movement for transformation. I think I chose the right moment, and we climbed up and out, ready to move on. What had taken place was not a debate, but an outpouring; not a challenge to faith, but an expression of doubt, frustration and grief; and through this process we had been drawn more closely together in our shared hopes and aspirations.

In the afternoon we opened with a good rowdy game, then returned to the 'snake'. We had reached the stage described as 'conflict resolution' and formed new groups of five or six to look at the question, 'What are our insights and values as people of faith for living with our differences? What are our principles for co-existence?' These groups reported back after tea, having evidently shared and generated some profound understandings at many levels. We then brainstormed ideas about what in our experience makes things better or worse in a conflict: helps and hindrances in the moment. The list produced was somewhat overloaded with abstract nouns and short on specific behaviours. This reflected a recurrent tendency in the group to feel more at ease with theories and generalisations than with immediate and specific experience.

To round off this session I drew and explained the 'ice-berg' model for conflict resolution, which begins from a base of respect, on that builds communication, and through communication works towards the co-operative task of generating and selecting options for an inclusive solution to the conflict.

The closing evaluation was very positive. Participants had found it really moving to share their feelings in the morning's session: their 'inner selves' as one person put it. It had been a 'highlight.' And one commented, 'It's OK - it's a group.' There was a general feeling of having arrived. Afterwards I wrote,

> 'The morning session was felt to be a fitting culmination and rounding off of our first days together - the first section of the snake. The plenary before lunch was full of pain and despair, but also determination and hope. I think I helped with my intervention a little over half way through, acknowledging the pain and despair but also identifying some sources of hope and inspiration. George was great. He's so steady and has such a lovely warm manner. The afternoon seemed fine, but I was too tired to judge any more. The evaluation was a bit sketchy beyond the

morning, as a good few had gone to prepare outdoor worship - which was wonderfully moving. Base groups failed to meet - which was fine. We all felt on holiday.'

(The next day was to be free.)

The worship sessions both fed into and reflected the spirit and content of our work. So did our singing and playing.

Wednesday

The Wednesday was for the participants an opportunity to visit the headquarters of the church organisation, have a nice lunch and see something of Geneva. For George and me it was a chance to recuperate, just *be* together, and take stock and make plans for the rest of the week. Our agreed outline agenda and the constant evaluation and feedback process we had devised made this as easy as it could be. The planning took many hours, but was well interspersed with personal conversation of all kinds. George astonished me with accounts of things he did as part of his Xhosa culture - like slaughtering an animal to bring an end to a run of bad luck. This for him sat perfectly comfortably with his Christianity. It made me wonder what things I did and took for granted, which others would see as at odds with my proclaimed (or assumed) beliefs. It seemed strange that we should feel so much at ease with each other in that place and work, when we carried such different worlds on our backs. We also exchanged accounts of our parents' deaths: a very intimate thing to do. We shared many of the same assumptions and feelings, though the scenarios and events were also very different. In all of this the thing which struck me and touched me was that we were able to talk quite freely, being as open about surprise and difference as we were about recognition and sameness, and finding our oneness in both: which sounds corny, but I don't know how else to say it.

Thursday

On the Thursday morning we looked in more detail at the 'iceberg' model and then went on to do some listening exercises. We used a representation of a mouth and an ear and the space in between to invite thinking about the complexities of communication which arise from the moods, expectations, attitudes and capacities of speakers and listeners, and the contexts in which they find themselves.

After the break and a discussion of the characteristics of assertive speaking, participants were asked to think of a situation in which they had been passive or aggressive rather than assertive, and to describe that situation to their partner, asking them to be 'the other' and trying out in a mini role-play a new, assertive approach.

Leonardo, a Spanish speaker from the Dominican Republic, had provided us with an excellent role model the previous afternoon, when he had come to the microphone at the end of the evaluation and said, 'When I get up and speak and everyone has to run for their headsets, I feel discriminated against, because I have to wear mine all the time to hear you, and I want to be able to speak without having to wait for you to be ready.' I had used this as an example when introducing the idea of assertive speaking. Eli, a Finnish participant, offered us a neat formula for helpful communication: Smile, Open, Forward, Touch, Eye-contact, Nod (whose first letters spell 'soften'). Some people were pleased with this, but when we questioned the group it emerged that these guidelines in many cases were culturally determined and could be taken as universal only in spirit - not in the particular: a useful learning.

Before lunch we had time for a brief discussion about the difficulties of handling strong emotions in order to be appropriately assertive as we would wish.

In the first afternoon session, thinking of stereotyping as one obstacle to good communication, we looked at the question of identity and belonging: the different groups we were part of and things about those groups that we were either proud or ashamed of. We also recalled times when we had been on the one hand victims of discrimination and on the other hand guilty of discrimination ourselves. We spoke about the need to be critical of our own cultures, as well as valuing them, and able to respect others and their identities while at the same time being able to take issue with a particular approach or behaviour.

After tea we introduced the idea of 'reframing,' or finding new approaches to relationships and problems. One form of reframing needed is a shift from seeing a problem as being caused or suffered by one party, with one alone able to solve it, to seeing it as being the affair of two and often several parties who all need to contribute to a solution and be included in it. In 'needs and fears mapping' the parties are identified and their different needs and fears listed: a method of gaining some insight

into the way each relates to the problem. This George introduced, using by way of illustration a case from his own experience of local government in South Africa.

Before going into the final evaluation I told the group that the next morning they would be trying out this 'needs and fears mapping' on their own case studies. I reported that one or two women had said to me that it would be good to have the opportunity to work in an all women group at some point and asked whether this might seem an appropriate opportunity for that to happen. At this point 'the shit hit the fan.' Pain, indignation and incredulity were expressed by several men in quick succession. I asked for one of the women whose idea it had been to explain the request, which one of them did most gently, caringly and clearly. This helped some to be less defensive, but there was still much leaping to the mike by men - in some cases to complain that it was for the women, not the men, to speak and choose. Three other women did speak, but very briefly: two to support the idea of an opportunity to work together as women, and one to say that she herself did not have such a wish, although she had no objection to others' doing so.

One of the South African men was very angry: not, he said, because he had any objection to the idea, but because of the way it had been brought to the group, by me, as he saw it. This was puzzling, since I had explained that I had been approached by women participants with the request, and was presenting it on their behalf. He explained that he couldn't see why the idea hadn't been raised in the base groups; so really what I think he was complaining about was the lack of openness at that level, rather than what I at first heard, which was that I was using my role as facilitator to push my own agenda. I suppose these two explanations are not mutually exclusive, ie he maybe saw it all as a plot between me and one or two individuals. Although that seems to me an unduly negative interpretation, since I was open and exact with the group about how I came to be making the proposal, I can see that this was aside from the regular procedure of individuals making proposals to the facilitators via the base groups.

Had I grasped clearly what (I think) he was saying at the time, we could have discussed whether this was improper and why it had happened that way - which would have been interesting and might have revealed something about the dynamics, particularly male-female dynamics, in the base groups. As it was, I apologised for any unclarity in my explanation and the participant in question accepted my apology but still seemed very angry. I and others tried to talk to him at intervals during the next two days, but he

remained angry and distant and kept saying it 'was over' and that there was 'nothing to talk about'. Then suddenly he was back with us, fully engaged and very helpful. Maybe he had been dealing with problems of his own. It had been clear from the start that he was carrying a great deal of pain and anger from his own experiences in South Africa.

Before the session closed we reached agreement that if there enough women who would like to work in a women's group the next day they should do that. In the evaluation which followed, participants noted that it had been good for us to recognise that we had some unresolved problems ourselves and had had to handle our own conflict. The men had been affirmed within the process (I'd have liked some more real affirmation of the women) and we had a real sense of being a group, continuing to get to know each other better. On the negative side, it was noted that in the debate men had spoken more than women, that men had resisted the idea that women should have the opportunity to meet as women, and, conversely, that women had sought to discriminate between males and females.

There was also a complaint that not enough time had been allowed for plenary reports from group work, which showed that work was not taken seriously and that time management seemed more important than the depth of discussion. Here I interposed that this imputation of motivation - or lack of it - to the facilitators was out of step with the guiding principles for assertive speaking discussed earlier in the day, but acknowledged, and acknowledge now as I write, that we clearly had (mis)managed time in such a way as to engender these feelings, losing touch with the felt needs of at least some members of the group. Maybe, with hindsight, we should have jettisoned some input; maybe I should have screened out Eli's SOFTEN [communication formula - see above] - and run the risk of seeming to disrespect her and her group, which had proposed the inclusion of her contribution; maybe we should have taken time from another day. But what we had been striving above all else to do was to take advice which had already come to us from one of the base groups to give plenty of time to the final 're-entry' phase of the workshop - advice which coincided with our own thinking - and therefore condense things, regrettably, at this stage in order to take pressure off the end.

We left for the evening worship all feeling, I think, tired and emotional. I noticed that I was really hurt and exasperated by the abrasive style and, I felt, unreasonable demands of Heinz, the German - whom I also greatly liked and in many ways admired. So before supper, knowing I would not be able to do so without tears, but unwilling to carry such

bad feelings about one of the participants, I spoke to him. I told him how much I liked him and the things I admired about him, but also how I felt about his words and behaviour, giving him specific examples of what had upset me and why, acknowledging at the same time that George and I had not always got things right. I apologised for my tears and explained why I had chosen to speak to him immediately rather than wait till I had a better chance of self-control.

His response was entirely positive. He was shocked to realise the impact of his words and style; acknowledged that he had not considered that I might need affirmation as well as criticism, and that the demands made by him and others were often mutually incompatible, appreciated my openness and affirmation and gave me plenty in return, (to the point of coming to me later and saying he would like some day to have the chance of working with me). We were still able to discuss the issue of time given for group reports in an honest way. Altogether I felt we had both done well and lived, in this instance, our beliefs, being respectful and open to ourselves and each other.

The groups which met for evaluation that evening were not the usual base groups, but regional groups which also had the task of preparing contributions for a 'cultural evening' prepared by one of the base groups. The feedback these regional groups gave us included the view from one quarter that I was very democratic and that this made trouble for me. Consensus was difficult to achieve and I would do well to be more dictatorial. This same group expressed its appreciation of the facilitators' role and comments, but felt that the contributions of both facilitators and other participants in plenary discussions on group reports were sometimes too long: we could all be briefer. And they made the significant observation that some of the more meaningful things shared in small groups people were not willing to repeat in plenary, so that the true depth of group discussions was not mirrored in the plenary sessions which followed.

This was the European group, the one Heinz was in. I felt the carefully affirmative and constructive way in which critical feedback had been framed was an indication either that he was having a very particular influence within the group, or that he had shared with the group the content of our conversation, or that the group had seen that I was upset and had been particularly careful - caring - in the way they framed their feedback.

The men in the Africa group, according to their report, had found the intensity of the work done in twos and threes difficult, and would have preferred to spend more time in

plenary. (One of the things most of the women found difficult about many of the men was their unwillingness to stop generalising and theorising and share real personal experience.) The group also commented that the confusion in the original workshop invitations about the purpose of the workshop had created difficulties for them as participants and us as facilitators. They had asked themselves what they would have gained by the end of the workshop, in exchange for all the experiences they had shared. (I greatly appreciated the honesty of this report - felt honoured by it. I shared their frustration of course, but can also say that this was a kind of 'bottoming out' phase, and that by the end of the workshop these people, despite their justified criticisms, were glad to have been there.)

The Asia group had liked the day in general, but reported some dissatisfaction that the women's issues had been taken so seriously when other requests had not been met. Here we detected a harking back to one participant's regret that we had not spent more time on introductions - and he had missed the first round anyway, by arriving late - and that they had not had written advance information about participants. We decided to ask each participant to write a paragraph about her/ himself to be sent out with a corrected address list after the workshop.

In my journal that night I wrote,

> 'Midnight and it's too late and I'm too tired for much reflection; but to-day George said it 'was coming' and he was right: the experiential learning...I was caught with my own deep passion and identity to handle in my role as facilitator. I think I coped well. I was also exhausted by it and had to cope with what felt like another attack from Heinz on another front - which was the last straw from him - which I also feel pleased about the way I handled. I went to him knowing I would cry and explained my difficulty - I could scarcely speak - but spoke my admiration to him and my pain and my complaint and my deep need for affirmation as well as criticism as clearly and as non-attackingly as I could and he heard me well and we loved each other and were still able to explain to each other our views and difficulties regarding the agenda.'

(Here I should perhaps comment that when I first wrote my account description of this episode, I had not re-read the above journal passage. I am interested to find how closely the two accounts resemble each other - only the contemporaneous one contains even more emotion.)

The night's entry concludes,

'Great, happy party to-night after all the grief. Only Leicester (from South Africa) missing and Sarah (the main speaker for the women's group proposal) still shaken.'

We had in fact processed our conflict sufficiently for the party to be wonderfully timely. We all relaxed and let go and revelled in each other's company and the richness of the group, and ate and drank and forgot, or at least set aside, the burdens we carried -even the threatened war in Burundi. The Asians performed a macabre skit about the disposal of a corpse and I was afraid it would be too near the bone for the bishop; but he entered into the spirit of things and laughed a lot and really seemed to let go of his troubles for the evening.

Friday

The next morning, after thanks to the party organisers, and our usual report on base group feedback and agenda review, we collected ideas on third party roles in conflict, both positive and negative. We focused on the mediator role, and asked for examples from participants' own cultures: who might perform the role and how they would go about it. George then summarised the steps which seemed common to mediation in all cultures and got the group to brainstorm the qualities and functions of a good mediator.

After the break, four groups, including one of women only, worked together on their own chosen case of conflict, mapping the needs and fears of the different parties to the conflict, then devising a role-play in which some kind of mediation was attempted. This group work we allowed to take its own time, and in the event it lasted through most of the rest of the day, with reporting in the final session. We had invited the groups to consider the option of taking as their case study our own conflict of the previous day. The only group which seriously considered this option was the women's group, and in the event they decided to examine instead the injustices against women in their own countries, mapping their needs and fears. They produced a very substantial and sobering report, and never got to the role play. In other words, they deviated from the set task and used some of what they had been offered for their own purposes - which seemed fine to George and me.

Another group had reverted to a previous case (Ninoy's Philippino fisherwomen) and re-analysed it, using needs and fears mapping to report on the findings of their role-played

mediation rather than to inform it - which also seemed fine. More regrettable was the plight of the group which had failed to get beyond a rather general and inconclusive discussion, on account, they said, of the lack of adequate interpretation and sporadic absences of group members. One group only followed our proposal in a thorough and faithful way - and they were (or Heinz was) a little indignant that others had failed to fulfil the allotted task. George and I were delighted that the participants had little by little taken more responsibility for the running of things and had used the day in ways which were useful to them. We were not expecting uniformity and had supported the groups' choices as we went around.

Apart from the disappointment of the group which had been hampered by inadequate interpretation, the closing evaluation of the day was entirely positive. Some of the things said were an expression of the group's relief that we had weathered the storm over the women's group issue: that the feared thing had happened and that in the event it had not destroyed our unity. Our facilitation was appreciated and the ample and flexible time given for the groupwork and reporting back was gratefully acknowledged. There was another flow of gratitude for the great pleasure of the previous night's party, where all had belonged and participated: a proof of the 'culture of peace'. David (from Ethiopia)'s poem, written and read in stages while the party was in progress was seen as having captured the spirit of the evening.

Early the next day I wrote,

> 'Working with George has been the great blessing of all this. He's not into self-doubt and self-blame. If we clearly made a mistake he'll say so, but from the point of view of someone who doesn't think that's a big deal - just part of being human: a very good lesson for me.
>
> Yesterday felt very relaxed and feedback was positive. People tried to be affirming of the women's group work (despite inappropriate laughter and profound incomprehension in some ways from some people) and the analysis the women produced - and instances - was powerful. To-day again we're very relaxed. I was saying to George that little by little power has shifted from us to the group, though we still provide the frame. The group has grown into being progressively more of an entity able to take power productively.'

We had asked the base groups to give us some idea of their priorities for the use of our last full day together and on this, as in enthusiasm for the day we had just enjoyed, there was unity: we should proceed to the question of reconciliation and forgiveness, and work, in these final stages, in regional groups. This George and I had planned to suggest for the 're-entry' session, but now decided to propose for the whole day.

Saturday

We began the Saturday with some first farewells: sad; then explained the day. The first topic for the regional groups was as follows:

> '**From hurt to reconciliation: what does it take, for ourselves and others? What are the ingredients and steps needed, both internal and external (within ourselves and out in society) from the point of view of our faith and our experience?**'

The plenary session in which we heard the reports from the four regional groups (Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, with the remaining person from the Middle East opting to work with the Asians) lasted until lunch. A few would have liked to discuss the reports - particularly the differences between them - in plenary. Others, wishing to preserve the regional session planned for the afternoon, preferred to continue the discussion, as appropriate, in regional groups. Seeing that this procedural debate could last indefinitely, George and I conferred and then offered our judgement: that the regional groups should reconvene immediately after lunch. This decision was accepted by all, with much relief. (Also in this session I had finally reprimanded Heinz for talking to his neighbour while someone else had the mike.)

Later I noted again,

> 'The group has little by little started almost running itself, power and responsibility having largely changed hands and we facilitating very lightly. Ironically, we have also twice to-day (over the how to continue the discussion on reconciliation and over the use of a room) made decisions *for* the group in a direct way for the first time and they've been glad. They're confident now in their own power and accepted our decision-making happily, seeing it as a service.'

The first task for the groups in the afternoon was therefore to discuss the different reports from the morning; then to locate themselves on the 'snake' once more - and of course that positioning depended on the specific situations of different countries and the particular work of individuals. Then they were asked to consider how they saw their task now: what positive initiatives had already been undertaken and whether they had any new insights into their potential role.

The session's work was intense - especially in the large Africa group, which had had a tough but productive morning on the subject of forgiveness and now produced a most

impressive report. But the others also found the time useful for drawing threads together and reaching conclusions. The closing evaluation confirmed the sense of satisfaction everyone had found in these regional sessions and the real substance of this final work together. Only one of the Latin Americans felt sad that, as he saw it, his region was peripheral in world opinion these days, and that this had been reflected in the workshop. (I think the language barrier had a lot to do with this feeling, and it remains a question whether enough had been done, in the circumstances, to overcome it. The LA group had certainly been isolated in many ways and at many times.) Leicester [the South African who had been so angry], whose re-engagement had been such a gift to the group, expressed his satisfaction that the whole group had been willing to work together till the end, and another participant was grateful for the reassurance of having reached the 'win-win' stage of the conflict resolution process and concluded that real solutions were possible. [I think that must have been the last time I used the expression 'win-win.]

The base groups did not meet that evening. We all went to see the annual firework display in Geneva.

Sunday

After our usual silence and song on the final Sunday morning, we played a game and then got down to the business of overall evaluation. The first question, considered in groups of three or four, was

> **'Living with our differences: how did we do it - with our own differences of race, gender, culture, personality and regional perspective?'**

Then, working in the same groups, participants were asked to evaluate the content and process of our work, the way the group as a whole had engaged with it and the way they as individuals had engaged with it.

In this evaluation, it became clear that the learning which came from our own differences and the way we had lived with them had been of great importance to all the participants. They had 'learned a lot *about* other cultures, personalities and mentalities, different perceptions and understandings,' but also experienced directly the difficulties and the rewards of being part of such a disparate community: 'learned to live with our differences as a group, and how to work together - in group work and

through the processes we learned for conflict resolution.' Another group said that we had all 'gone through the process' of empowerment and conflict resolution. We had begun with a 'single goal' and started by trying to find what was common to us all, but through the work and the living had found and affirmed our differences.

Recognising these differences had, in the words of another group, enriched us. We had learned to appreciate them, to respect each other, to be considerate and where necessary to compromise. We had also 'broadened our understanding of different situations in different countries through open sharing.' Yet another group described our achievement as 'having become a family here together. We had conflicts over contents and about the women's group, but we coped. We developed strong personal relationships. We found that coming from different cultures, races and ideologies doesn't prevent people from living together.' And the Latin America group, which had suffered so much isolation because of language, said nonetheless that our 'goal had been attained'. In spite of all our differences we had been able to be a model of co-existence, recognising our differences, accepting and discussing them to our mutual enrichment. Respect had prevailed. This had confirmed us in our commitment to the promotion of a nonviolent culture, a 'culture of life.'

It is clear to me from these evaluations that the learning which comes from the sharing of information and reflection, and the learning which comes from the experience of the group dynamics - which also involves the planned and explicit learning processes of the workshop - are not separate in reality, although they can be separately named and to some extent separately discussed. As the Latin America group put it, 'The methodology and the process dynamics were very important in bringing us to an understanding of each other.' Another group felt that what they saw as a concentration on input and skills in the first few days had at that stage stifled debate on issues which needed to be grappled with - thereby, presumably, hampering the healthy processing of differences. My own assessment is that we held them in suspension until people were able to cope with them more maturely.

The programmed content of the workshop was generally considered good and relevant, enriched as it was by cultural exchange; but also 'packed'. This was certainly a source of pressure and friction at times, and doubtless limited potential learning.

On the other hand, the variety in the programme had made for enjoyment and full personal engagement, and the whole process was considered to have been participatory

and open. The use of the base groups, and the flexibility and responsiveness of the facilitators, were appreciated. One group at least felt that time management had been good. The pack of written materials provided by an international nonviolence organisation was seen as an excellent resource for further learning and as a tool for participants who planned future training work.

Our worship, in which we had shared at the deepest level our differences and our unity, was seen by everyone to have played a key role in our growing and learning together - along with our cultural evening and all our singing and playing, our talking and laughter. Through it all we had, as one group put it, 'internalised' the idea of living with differences. We would go back prepared to 'do' it. As someone else said, 'Peace is the way' and our workshop had been part of the peace process.

Finally, participants were asked to consider what, if anything, the church organisation should do as follow-up to this workshop. All wished to see future workshops organised at the regional level. One group suggested another fully international workshop too, but dividing 'beginners' from more 'advanced' participants. Another group proposed a real 'training for trainers' and the preparation of people who could be peace-makers, for instance mediators, at the regional level. They saw our present group as a core group for this future programme expansion. The church organisation was seen as a potential provider of help with networking (as was the nonviolence organisation) and of financial help and training materials. It was proposed that the church organisation should write for further, considered evaluations after three months and again in a year's time. [Because of a change in staff, this follow-up was not carried through.]

After the results of all these deliberations had been reported, the rest of the morning was given to thanking, giving presents, hugging, and writing nice things about each other on each other's backs. Our final worship, held outside under the trees, ran well into lunch time and was full of joy and gratitude, a fitting celebration of all that we had shared together and all that motivated us to keep up the struggle - which by now we understood to be one: one struggle, one life.

Afterwards George said to me, 'It's been a good group because we performed a miracle' (meaning a miracle in the light of all the confusion as to for whom and for what the workshop was intended) I wonder. We had certainly worked hard, and with all our intuition and intelligence, to help this group of disparate individuals with widely varying needs and wants to find also a unity and discover a common purpose, to learn

from each other's experiences and from the shared experience of being and struggling together. We had also shared things from our own hearts and minds and lives which we felt could be of use. Some of the difficulties which confronted us all - those caused by confusion over purpose and participation, and those caused by inadequate organisational support - could have been avoided, in which case the learning from what I can only call the 'out there' content would have been more focused and probably more satisfactory and immediately useful. On the other hand the learning from our own difficulties would perhaps have been less.

At the airport later that afternoon I made the following notes:

'The final evaluation was, overall, very positive. Reflections on how we had 'lived with our differences' recorded the strong desire to find unity, especially at first, but, as we went on, participants' acceptance and celebration of difference. As George said, we encouraged that by starting the process in mixed groups and coming to the regional work only towards the end, when our commonalties had been experienced and we were strong enough as a community to acknowledge differences. The *hint* of South-North blaming and guilt that I felt early on really disappeared later. Though the analysis, which was shared, remained the same, a spirit of respect and solidarity increasingly informed it.'

(As I reflect now, if we had wanted deliberately to sharpen conflict within the group, in order for people to learn from it, we could have done it the other way round, ie started with regional groups. If, however, our process is intended also to model what we 'teach,' I think that a model designed to provoke conflict would be a dangerous one. One could start from difference and separation in a deliberate and focused way which would enable reflection first on the things which divide, before moving towards a focus on the things which are shared. I'm not sure whether that would have produced a similar end result. In any case, I think our learning from our own interactions was very important and could perhaps have been even more so.)

Of course the evaluation wasn't 100% positive. Almost all the regrets related in one way or another to shortage of time , and George and I felt you couldn't really do a longer seminar (because of the likelihood of complete exhaustion) or include less in it, given the topic; and cost and distance meant it all 'had' to be covered at once. Different people put priority on different things, which means you can't please everyone all the time. People who couldn't have more time in groups or for plenary reporting and discussion felt sometimes that their work or responses were not respected (I think probably only one or two and once or twice.)

One, maybe two, of the participants felt we should have fixed a firm programme and just stuck to it. In fact we followed very much our original plans for content, expanding, predictably, into the spare day we had kept for options or as a 'cushion'.

We felt the base group process for feedback, in addition to the daily end-of- session evaluation, was an excellent way of respecting the feelings and wants of participants, as well as our function as facilitators. Without this system we guess we would have fallen apart, with the group we had. It also served to help the bonding process.

I think we did right to leave most of the expansiveness (opportunity to allow participants to take their time) to the last couple of days, so people felt really good at the end. And I think our final affirmation games and celebrations and speeches were all important. I think we all left feeling we had become a community and were not only respected but loved.'

And here I added a thought I have written elsewhere: 'Perhaps only love can counteract hate. Respect lacks the emotional force needed.'

I have since reflected that the community was a temporary one, and that learning inferred from this experience could be misleading. Had we stayed together for much longer, we would most likely have entered new phases of conflict. Nonetheless, given the respect and affection which had developed between us, we could probably have handled them. The question for wider reflection may be how to create community out of difference in 'ordinary' (and extraordinary) life.)

'George said he'd never experienced real shared facilitation as we had done it together, and that having met me and planned with me before was what had made it possible for him (and me) to cope with the following (all breaches of clear agreements made with the church organisation):

> The organisers had invited a complete mix of people, in terms of engagement and levels of awareness and experience. They had given them a false expectation of the purpose of the workshop (letter about 'training for trainers'). We had no information in advance about the participants, not they of each other. (The latter remained as something of an obstacle throughout). There was no-one from the church organisation to accompany our process to attend to practicalities, no-one to record proceedings and write a report, no-one to take photos or slides, no-one to liaise with the centre or explain the house rules, no-one taking adequate care of the interpreters and interpretation, no-one to tell us we would have to vacate our room for the last two days, no-one to convene a worship group (the base groups did an excellent job in the event and that arrangement was probably better than the one we had planned), no ready made chapel services twice daily, no evening programme of speakers and videos (probably just as well). As George said, we were expected to perform a miracle and we did.'

As I copy that from my journal, I recall the feeling that we had of being abused. The stress caused by the ever threatening chaos which resulted from these broken agreements was immense. It had considerable impact on the participants, translators and others, and the collected impact was felt by us.

As I stagger towards the end of this mammoth account, I observe learnings of many kinds. I think it possible, perhaps likely, that what was most instructive for me (and

probably for the participants) was the process itself: the lived experience of playing that role within that group. I also, of course, received new information, saw the world through many new pairs of eyes, heard new and inspiring stories of human courage and compassion, generosity and pertinacity. I had an opportunity to re-evaluate the models and concepts we used and offered for use, and the processes for collective thinking and practising skills.

It is difficult to separate these different elements from each other; maybe unreal and therefore deceptive. The notion of respect seems ever more complex and illusive. Reflecting endlessly on the intricate dance of human relating, the layers upon layers of subtle motivation and effect, the continuous chain of action and interaction, brings with it a sense of confusion and disempowerment, as well as excitement.

But if I let go of the struggle to understand, I do understand that we were a group of people who went through a challenging, trying, exciting time together, in the midst of very busy and in some cases dangerous lives; who in spite of everything made a commitment to each other, kept to it, respected each other, took care of each other, and became one with each other. And this experience of building a community out of difference has, in the end, confirmed me in my tendency to hope.

On rereading this account, I am struck not only by its detail and length but by the number of layers of noticing, inquiring and reflecting that went into the writing of it, together with its subsequent framing and commentary. At each layer I am testing and questioning the meaning of what went on and of my own constructions and responses. I was in dialogue a great deal with George during and after each day of the workshop, and re-examined and reflected on that dialogue in my journal. That journal conversation was brought under scrutiny in the writing of my account, and that account in turn elicited more comments and questioning from my supervisor and colleagues. Now, as I come to the end of this presentation of the account to my reader, with further commentary added, I feel that the thoroughness of my inquiry in relation to this workshop, relatively early on in my research process, while it may feel laboured, established for me some important habits of attention and reflection. It also provided me with a rich fabric of information about my own and others' behaviour and thinking, which has provided a backcloth - for subsequent workshops.

This week in Geneva gave me a great opportunity for testing, in a multicultural setting, much of the workshop content presented earlier, in Chapter Four, as well as the 'stages' diagram. The discussion about nonviolence and violence was important and challenging. But the overriding importance of the workshop, for me and it seemed for others, was that it brought together people of so many cultures in one experience and one discussion; that the experience was, for all its difficulties, a positive one, and that we seemed to have a discussion that had meaning for everyone, in spite of linguistic and cultural barriers.

One of the participants wrote a report for the organisers which describes events in much the way I remember and have described them. That (in addition to my conversations with George at the time) gives me some reassurance that my own subjectivity is not disconnected from the experience of others (at least one other) who were part of the workshop. What interests me most, however, is the way in which the report writer uses the 'stages' diagram to track the group's own journey, from a situation in which all kinds of conflicts lay beneath the surface, and power was an issue between us, through confrontation, to a kind of resolution, and a commitment to work together to maintain the community we had built. This mirrors my sense of the journey this group travelled. It also confirms my observation that the 'snake' model acted as a really useful frame for participants' thinking. At the same time it would seem to vindicate - or fulfil - the emphasis George and I placed in our opening session on the assumption that we would learn from our own experience of living with differences. This was an apparent success in experiential learning: one which has not always been matched in subsequent workshops.

The experience of facilitation, in a group of such powerful and varied individuals, with so many potential sources of conflict, provided me with an excellent context for self-examination and learning as a facilitator. The power struggles which went on between facilitators and participants did not have a clear North-South dimension, though maybe that dimension was present, to some degree, in the discussion of nonviolence and the row about gender relations. This was a group where there were so many differences, that lines of division did not, on the whole, form clearly; and George and I between us 'represented' both South and North.

While so much about this workshop was positive, the shortcomings in its preparation and support, together with the lack of follow-up, raise the difficult question of responsibility in freelance work: where does it begin and end? Am I responsible for any failures in organisation, or is it my responsibility to try and compensate for them? Can I do other than try to do so? This question, like so many others, will recur in later accounts, including the next.

Later visits to Geneva

As I explained at the beginning of this chapter, I was to return to the Geneva centre twice, at a time when I was not longer writing full-scale accounts. In September 1996, just over a year after my first workshop there, I went back to co-facilitate a second international workshop. This one constituted the major opening component of the centre's annual fourteen week 'Graduate School' for church people, both clergy and lay, from around the world. The theme for the 1996 course was 'Being an agent of God's peace'. I worked with an old friend and colleague whom I shall call Michael. The purpose of our introductory workshop, spread over six working days, was help build a learning community in the group of students (about twenty of them), and to introduce in a practical way (and so engage them with) some key aspects of conflict, peace and peace-making. The forty-five participants (the largest group I have ever worked with) came from the Far East, the Indian sub-continent, Africa, Latin America and Europe.

In the December I went back (without Michael this time) to help students to end the term as they had begun it: by relating the theme of the Graduate School, and now all the learning they had done, to their home situations, and to give them a chance to think about its application in their life and work. I learned a great deal from my work with this group, and will use my journal notes her to present certain aspects and episodes from it which have been of particular significance for my ongoing learning.

I will begin with an episode which illustrates well the way in which a simple process (in this case asking participants to think about their own experiences of violence) can bring culture into

question, enabling the participants to enter into their own debate without any facilitator intervention. This is what I wrote in my journal:

> 'On the second day of the September workshop, when we were thinking about different forms of violence, one group came up with 'cultural violence' as a category, and the reporter, a woman from Sierra Leone, gave the example of female genital mutilation as an example. At this a male participant from South Africa took the mike and said that maintaining cultural practices was an important way of fostering and affirming a sense of identity, especially in post-colonial Africa. The woman then strode back to the mike and declared that she could not accept that as a justification of violence against women: that culture could not be used as an excuse for oppressive practices.'

This exchange led to a rich, extended debate about culture in relation to fundamental values. Within this ecumenical Christian group it was clear that there was a higher - or deeper - frame of reference by which culture not only could but should, according to participants, be measured. However, beyond theological language, respect for life, needs and dignity were at the core of what was shared: values I encountered in every workshop. I have encouraged conversations about values in a variety of ways, as I explained in Chapter Four. These debates and explorations provide the ground for re-examining cultural assumptions: a process which is constantly challenging to me, as well as to participants.

During the same workshop, language again became an issue. In the first Geneva workshop it had been the Spanish speaking minority which became disaffected. This time it was the French speaking group. I will again quote from my journal:

> 'The question of minority rights has come up for me again here. The French-speaking participants (speaking French as a second or third language, that is) have felt severely disadvantaged and were quite disaffected on the first day. By paying a lot of attention - explicitly - to their needs, and acknowledging how hard things are for them, we have eased their feelings and, to a degree, their practical difficulties: speaking more slowly, spending a lot of time in language groups, getting written materials translated, writing things up in French. They asked if I could sometimes facilitate plenaries in French. I hesitated. Maybe I could and should; but I felt pretty sure it would be too much for me [this had come up in Harare too] and I would fail everyone and exhaust myself utterly in the process, so I said no; which brings me to the critical question: How much disruption to, or drawing away from, overall needs should how many people be entitled to expect? It seems to me that 'rights', if the concept is useful, cannot be absolute, but relative; and in practice the balance between various need and rights is found by the active sensible and compassionate exercise of responsibility by everybody.
>
> In this case, in a group where most are speaking and listening in a language not their own, most are experiencing difficulties of some degree. We are finding, as a group, ways of

making this viable as a learning community. Some individuals are voluntarily working in French when English would be much easier for them; others are making the effort to speak more slowly; others still are translating for, and otherwise working to include, those who speak little English and no French. In these ways the linguistically powerful are working to use their power to divest themselves of some of it by sharing it.'

In my subsequent journal reflections I wrote:

'Rereading these notes, I observe two things. One, that power contests can get in the way of coping, to everyone's detriment, whereas pragmatic co-operative, caring approaches can be pretty effective; two, that I regularly feel impatience towards French-speaking lobbies, and that this stems not only from a reaction to what sometimes seems like petulant behaviour, but from my own prejudice against the French (yes, really, I'm sorry to say), and my own liking for linguistic power and lack of sensitivity about it. How do I try to deal with this disrespect in myself - because I think I have at some level been aware of it? I try to behave respectfully: to acknowledge my advantage, thank people for the linguistic efforts they make and acknowledge their skill, ask people to tell me what I can do more helpfully, try to speak slowly and clearly. Sometimes, though, I know I forget, and play with words at the expense of clarity, or take advantage of my power to take control. That last one is hard, because it can be important for a facilitator to take power sometimes.'

My Geneva workshops were for Christians. At all of them games and worship were a vital part of the our process. (I realise that I think of play as a spiritual matter.) My temporary reintegration and emotional reabsorbtion into mainstream Christianity was on all three occasions a powerful experience. It brought with it a sense of loss, for the clear - if not simple - faith I had once had. The times of worship at the end of each day, at that first workshop with George, played an important role for participants in processing the challenges, insights and emotions or our sessions. The same was true for the workshops with the graduate school, as is shown by this journal entry from the beginning of the term:

'I had a very powerful sense, in chapel with them [the participants] this evening, that for all their immense differences, this group has, in a shared faith, a common language and frame for living and viewing the world. It made me feel the disintegratedness of having no such faith, as many of us in the West have not. What comes in the place of such a frame, if anything? I feel I live between two worlds in this respect.'

I made a similar journal entry when I returned at the end of that term.

'Our worship made a place for fear, grief, longing, anger and love; for hope and acceptance and trust. To see tiny Burmese Peter, with his wrinkled smiling face, addressing us [in English] on Jonah, while Yoru from the Ivory Coast, tall, strong, smooth-faced and confident, translated into French,

paying minute attention to Peter's precise words and meaning, was to see enacted the transcendent community that Bossey is about and of which Peter spoke. When I feel overwhelmed by a sense of loss at leaving this group again, what am I really crying for?'

I shall return to the question of spiritual needs in my concluding chapters. Meanwhile, I will go back to June 1995, when I had another quite different opportunity for intercontinental exchange: one which at the time I was so tired I would have preferred to avoid. It proved, nonetheless, a wonderful occasion to learn from the reflections of experienced trainers from very diverse backgrounds, who yet shared a common commitment to nonviolent approaches in dealing with conflict and injustice.

ISRAEL/ PALESTINE

The account which follows is self-explanatory, in that it includes a description of the nature and context of this cross-cultural gathering of trainers, and my participation and role in it. Like the first Geneva workshop, it will be reproduced in full and without change, apart from the addition of subheadings and one or two minor clarifications. It has a particular focus on self-care, as its title shows; but the wider learning from this workshop was immense. The account, like the journal notes on which it is based, is more generally discursive than the last, and does not describe events in such detail. It explores cultural approaches in relation to different themes, recording (sometimes in detail and at other times in outline) what was said by individuals and groups, and reflecting on these things. Among the ideas discussed is the notion of the separate self and individualism, as compared with collectivist or communitarian perspectives. I explore some implications of these different perspectives for the concept of respect, and the way in which the philosophy of nonviolence embraces both.

I also reflect on the relationship between different ways of defining society and attitudes to retribution. I have garnered some insights into what is needed for reconciliation; into the connection between the idea of impunity and the restoration of community, and into the relationship between these issues and respect. The question of cultural evaluation came up, as it did in Geneva, and I describe conversations which helped me clarify my own thinking. I record

some discussion on social conformity, and the suppression of personal views and feelings, in India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, and the criticism levelled against these cultural norms by the participants from those countries.

The Neve Shalom workshop, like the one in Geneva, was a living experiment in intercultural relations, and the possibility and difficulties of dealing respectfully with cultural differences and of finding common meaning. In this case the power dynamics of North-South relations constituted a specific and conflictual aspect of difference.

Reflections on the fundamental respectfulness (or not) of working cross-culturally as a trainer are intertwined with an attempt to come to terms with my own self-doubt, and I review my attitude towards Gandhian nonviolence. This seems to have been a time, on the whole, for me to make peace with myself and my work.

'REFLECTIONS ON AN INTERNATIONAL TRAINERS' GATHERING HELD IN

ISRAEL IN JUNE 17 - 25 1995 - SELF-CARE AS STRUGGLE.

Background

Although the prospect of returning to Israel/Palestine held some excitement, I felt so tired and overwhelmed by work that I really did not want to go to this meeting, which was to last eight days and which I had undertaken to follow with two days' work with a group of young Palestinians. The venue for the gathering was to be the village of Neve Shalom/ Wahat al Salam (which I shall from now on abbreviate) - 'Oasis of Peace' - a community where Palestinians and Israelis live side be side and offer opportunities for young people from the either side of the divide to come together and learn about each other's experiences and perspectives.

The opportunity to stay in such a place and to meet with a group of people working on the same lines as me from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the USA and Europe might be expected to be irresistible. My reluctance came, I think, from some unprocessed feelings about unpaid work (which this was) and what I had come to regard as abusive

dependence on committee members by paid staff of an organisation with which I am closely associated. It also came from the fact that I had, overall at that time, too much work, too much travel and too much on my mind.

This reluctance continued right up to my departure, and was compounded by my having a car accident two days before leaving, and by the news that the person most responsible for the gathering had withdrawn from participation, leaving even more unwanted responsibility with the committee [onto which I had been co-opted]. My response to this news was to feel even more overwhelmed, reluctant and, in the end, obliged to go. This dilemma I discussed with my research supervisor, the day before my flight, as well as with others close to me, and I resolved that I would go but would make a major effort at self-care while I was away, in particular arranging to pay for a room in the hotel at Neve Shalom, rather than sleeping, or trying to sleep, in a dormitory - since the car accident had left me exhausted by shock and with an unusually bad back, and I was very anxious about sleep. I also agreed with my supervisor that the focus for my research (and therefore record keeping) in Israel would be my respect for my own needs - thus reducing the weight of my research efforts, as well as focusing them.

Self-care in practice: which self? Context and boundaries

In the event, as I reported in my next supervision session, I ended up focusing on self-care, and keeping quite detailed records; but also on 'everything else', because I would have 'been a lunatic' not to use this unique opportunity for collecting material: a time with fellow trainers and educators from all continents (apart from Australasia), brought together to talk about nonviolence, conflict resolution, reconciliation -everything germane to my research. This did, however, present me with a major 'self-care' challenge (and opportunity for intensive learning), since, in addition to my now extended research focus, I had to cope with my duties as a member of the planning group for the week, plus intensive discussions about the organisational crisis which had landed us with the additional responsibilities that we, as a planning group, were carrying. [Participation in the planning group was particularly stressful since I was painfully aware of its North-Western composition. I argued vigorously for changing it, to no avail, and at one point suggested to disgruntled participants from the South that they might propose taking over responsibility.] Furthermore, I chose to help with English-French translation, particularly in 'continental' sessions. Only two of the five participants from Africa had eventually been able to come, and they had no common

language. Since I both wanted them to be able to work together and hoped to learn from their discussions, I volunteered to be their interpreter - which I found fascinating but very tiring.

As I reflected, and reflect, on all this, self-care takes on a very indistinct, or complicated, shape and meaning. Which self? My tired, fragile self? My researching self, excited by unique opportunities for discovery? My organisationally committed self, whose sense of integrity and self-respect requires the fulfilment of responsibilities - including those not willingly assumed but landed on me by default? My caring self, concerned for the load of others similarly placed? My concerned-for-the-world self, who wanted this event to be a success and everyone in it to benefit -and the world, in some small way? The self confused, embarrassed and challenged by my identity as a representative of the privileged North-West, with the power and choice that appears to give me? The concept and exercise of self-care seems, to say the least, problematic, in the face of such differing and competing selves and wants.

These wants emerged in relation to a particular context; a further question then raises itself. How could I ever have believed (if I ever did) that care for my tired, fragile self would be possible in such a context? How, for instance, could I have thought that I alone, in a group of life- and travel-worn people, could purchase for myself a private room in a separate building: an underrate of luxury in the eyes of most of the world, whatever the 'need'? How could I take a day off, as I had promised myself, while my equally exhausted colleagues struggled on? How could any of us decide to take the holiday we really needed, when we had been brought together, at great expense, with other people's money, for a particular, other, purpose: one which we all shared? So we struggled together to find some kind of equilibrium, to combine some degree of care for ourselves as a group with attention to the business of our meeting; some measure of individual self-preservation with care for each other.

So it became clear to me that self-care cannot be done in isolation. Just as the self is not a fixed and single entity operating alone, but a complex and changing interdependent being, so self-care cannot be planned or enacted independently of the needs and care of others, or of the context in which all are situated. In the same way that self-respect and respect for others can be seen as interdependent, so a person who cares about others, and sees such caring as an important value in her/his life, will need to find forms of self-care that do not violate those feelings and that value. The context

will play a major role in determining what is therefore feasible, so, where the context itself is a matter of choice, that may be where the choosing needs to happen.

In this particular context, which I had reluctantly chosen not to avoid, I did find many small areas of choice, where I was able to do self-preserving and assertive things - such as offering my notes for reading rather than go on interpreting when I was too tired; or missing a session in order to prepare something, rather than stay up late at night to do it. Even to make the effort to make such small choices was a struggle; and so the phrase 'self-care as struggle' has come to summarise my current view of this element in my research. The body, to maintain its equilibrium, must be constantly (albeit minutely) exercised in every muscle, according to its position and situation. In the same way I must be constantly balancing and adjusting my demands on myself and others in contexts where my multiple needs will be interacting with an infinity of other needs and considerations. Nonetheless - or perhaps all the more - I need to learn to give myself boundaries and make choices, if I am not to lose my bearings and my balance altogether. What can be positively framed as my openness to all possibilities can also leave me in danger of drowning in the multiplicity of my own and others' demands.

Concepts of identity

The notion of the separate self, contained within the idea of self-care, and the emphasis on the individual, which is characteristic of Western culture, were thrown into relief for me at this gathering by the related and contrasting assumptions of other world views. The philosophy of nonviolence, albeit founded on ideas of community and mutual responsibility, insists on the absolute value of the individual human person. The United Nations declaration on human rights - that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights - which one Chilean participant described as the secular basis for nonviolence, upholds this absolute value: one which is central to my idea of respect. But the individual, recognised, as far as I know, in any culture as a unit, must be understood in some kind of social context, as a component of another unit or units, and this contextual unit may, in some cultures, be more important than the individual.

One striking feature of the continental presentations, made in plenary sessions after continental group work, was the recurrent incapacity of the Europeans to produce any kind of synthesis of their discussions, so that they were obliged to offer an assortment of individual viewpoints. (This might have applied also to the US group, but there were only two North American participants, who worked together regularly, so their task was much easier.) Participants from other continents were struck by this fragmentation and, as it seemed to me from their reactions, felt it to be in keeping with the perceived self-preoccupation and social deficiencies of Westerners and their culture - in itself the mark of some failure in respect for others.

The Latin American participants spoke constantly of 'the people'. This concept carried powerful emotional overtones and seemed to have motivating force for their extremely well-organised and courageous work. 'The people' were clearly felt to be bound together, often in common suffering, in endurance, resilience and the capacity to celebrate life even in the face of death: thus deeply respected as an entity. The word 'solidarity' described both the firmness of this unity and the will and moral determination by which it was maintained. Dictators and those who worked for them, being by definition separate from 'the people,' were not included in this deep and spontaneous respect - though ultimately nonviolence could not exclude them.

Community and reconciliation; personal freedom and social harmony

In discussion concerning the concept of reconciliation, and what it could mean in practice, the Latin American contribution was based on this 'option for the people' (my phrase; cf liberation theology and 'option for the poor'), together with the idea of 'community'. The question of impunity has been the focus for bitterness and anger in Chile and elsewhere, since the relatives of the 'disappeared' have seen those responsible for the murder of their sons and husbands continue in their positions of power, while they are left without information or redress, and the dead are not honoured. One participant described reconciliation as rebuilding community, or people's capacity to live together. The community which was rebuilt had to include in some way those who had been part of it and had been killed, 'the ones who were together': their memories had to be respected, honoured. Furthermore, community had to be based on ethical values, which had to be 'revalued' for the community to be rebuilt. The 'false reconciliation' proposed by the government in Chile was based not on

such values but on economic and political expediency, and failed to respect 'the absent ones' or to include them in any way.

In addition, those who had transgressed against society were, he said, traditionally required to offer something back to society before they could be reintegrated. Under the 'impunity' proposals, this would not be done. This last point is, to me, particularly interesting, since from this perspective to require some form of reparation can be seen as more respectful towards the culprits than to ignore their crime. It is to offer them the possibility of re-inclusion. This is a far more positive approach than a simple demand for retribution. Whether it is current in mainstream Latin American culture I do not know, but it is clearly consonant with an emphasis on community and 'the people', as well as with nonviolence.

Retribution is, according to our participants from Uganda and Niger, a powerful reflex in their African cultures. The Ugandan said that in his society physical violence is quickly resorted to and provokes a violent response. In Niger, in the strongly hierarchical village unit, when there is conflict within the community, patience is enjoined on individuals and families, and the edicts of the chief, often punitive in content, are respected absolutely. But if an outsider transgresses, retribution can be swift and violent - as it was for the man who walked across someone else's piece of land and had his fingers summarily chopped off and presented to him in his hat.

From my outside perspective, this seems a shockingly restricted view of community and an unacceptably limited understanding of who is worthy of respect; but my African friends convinced me that the Latin American concept of 'the people' (or indeed of 'civil society') had no meaning in their societies and that tribal and clan loyalties were paramount - so that, for instance, someone finding himself in government has an unquestionable obligation to use his office to promote the interests of his own tribe and bestow favours on its members. According to our participant from Niger, 'The African does not exist as an individual or as part of a political structure, but as part of a family and a tribe. It would be very dangerous to try to get out of those units. A person would have to go right away. Dictatorial systems which favour a politician's own group are inevitable in that context.' (Which confirms my understanding that Western political systems are dangerously unsuitable in many parts of Africa. See Hiskias Assefa's discussion of this in 'Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm', 1993). Traditional processes and rituals for reconciliation after conflict are designed to restore proper relations within the tribal unit and public dignity to the victims, with face-

saving procedures for the different parties, using a (literal) scape-goat as the deflector or absorber of retribution.

Where personal individuality is not a core value, cultural conformity is proportionally more important. According to our participant from Nepal, in her culture the individual is regarded as interdependent with others, and the community or collective identity is of great importance. Maintaining harmony within the community is vital. Asian participants agreed that in their societies the public expression of individual emotions is not acceptable. This inevitably leads to the suppression of feelings which arguably (from the point of view of these participants) would be better expressed. Women in Nepal, for example, are told that 'a good woman will never complain.' Cultural norms linked with discrimination have a negative impact on young men in India, too, who are not allowed to have a say in family life and as a consequence are often angry and alienated.

Evaluating culture

The customary suppression of feelings could be seen as useful (and is no doubt so understood) in the preservation of social harmony; but when it is combined with strong ethnic and religious loyalties and what are, apparently, universal human passions, suppression may often lead to explosion. I feel free to conclude that Western individualism, though at its best it may be combined with a sense of social care and responsibility, often results in gross selfishness, exploitation and social disintegration; but I find it more awkward to take a critical view of other cultures whose values and mechanisms I do not fully understand.

From what emerged in our discussions in Israel, and from my own subsequent reflections, I conclude that all cultures are likely to have elements which are both positive and negative in their effect. The value given to patience in Niger helps people cope with relentlessly harsh conditions; it also encourages passivity in the face of gross oppression, including slavery. The strong social cohesion within the tribe and village, the value given to belonging, also finds expression in violent hostility to outsiders. 'Respect', in many cultures, including my own, can signify not only profound valuing and caring, but what to me seems an arbitrary and often misplaced appeasement of those in authority for reasons of gender, age, position or other hierarchical indicator. To me, Western individualist that I am, social norms are destructive (that is decrease

overall levels of human health and happiness), if they fundamentally contradict that UN declaration that 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and in rights' - and if my respect for other people and their cultures prevented me from affirming that, it would have become counter-productive.

It appeared to me that all of us at Neve Shalom were working both with and against our own cultures, trying to find the values within them that were consonant with our own deepest beliefs and aspirations, and to build on those values, feeling free to distinguish between their healthy and unhealthy application, dreaming of a future in which relationships and attitudes were transformed, constituting amongst us a culturally varied counter-culture. Respecting the everyday customs and symbols of a people, where they do not contravene any overriding value we may hold, can be regarded as a normal expression of respect; but the pedagogy of nonviolence, a pedagogy of liberation, is likely to encourage challenge, inviting students or participants to discover their own profound aspirations and then to examine their culture and identify the values and practices within it which on the one hand tend towards nonviolent behaviour and relationships, and on the other militate for violence and get in the way of peace and justice. As Monique from Niger remarked, 'There is something liberating in discovering the limitations of one's own culture. People are often oppressed by something in their culture but can't say so and it's a liberation when they do.' In her educational work, this moment of liberation was often reached through theatre, the spectators seeing in a new light things which in every day life they had taken for granted.

This view of the liberating role of education was shared across the continents represented at our gathering, and seen as both an individual and a community matter. Monique claimed to have spent a large part of her life recovering from her 'education' in France, which had crushed and fundamentally disrespected her. In Niger she had worked with teachers to help them discover how to work in co-operative and enabling ways with their very large classes, rather than by harsh discipline and control, and spoke of the joy and energy released by these new relationships. Educators from Sri Lanka, India and Nepal, working mainly with women and children, talked of the need to restore people's sense of self-respect and autonomy, and the idea that they had something to contribute. Participants from Ecuador and Brazil saw the restoration of self-respect as essential to the changing of anti-social behaviour, and the process of 'conscientisation' through education as the key to the rightful enactment of political power by the people. Nonviolence educators from North America and Europe, owing

much to Gandhi and to the liberation theology and pedagogy of Latin America, also described training in terms of enabling both personal change and social action.

Monique likened the educational process to the opening of a fan. This opening inevitably involved the challenge which came with new levels of awareness; for instance, the challenge to distinguish between facts and feelings; to refuse simplifications and demonisations and disrespect for other castes; to recognise the part played by history, but to see that it is history, and turn to the present; to recognise one's own part in a conflict. Challenging people of another culture requires great sensitivity and a capacity for self-awareness and self-criticism. We need to acknowledge clearly the negative aspects and effects of our own culture - and be open to challenge ourselves - if we are to question the customs and assumptions of others. In the (culturally laden) context of a training workshop we are working by invitation with people who are there by choice, in a participatory process which requires openness of a kind unusual in most cultures. What is important is that participants should have sufficient advance information about the workshop for that choice to be a real one.

One particularly difficult and important form of challenge which Monique and I discussed was the questioning of the kind of analysis not uncommon in post-colonial countries which lays all blame for, for instance, bloody conflict or corrupt government, at the door of history and the West. The colonial powers have much to answer for; but as long as the people of those post-colonial countries see themselves only as victims, they are refusing to accept not only their own responsibility in the present, but their power to change things for the future.

Intercultural dynamics: power in relationships; confronting differences

Challenging behaviour between individuals and groups can cause damaging conflict; but without risking the inevitably challenging expression of differences, we have to limit our interactions in a stultifying way, or else violate our own integrity. This gathering, like the seminar I co-facilitated for the church organisation last summer, began with a no doubt unconscious emphasis on commonalties - though those of us who had planned it had built in continental sessions from an early stage. It was our purpose to discover not only what were the aspects of our life and work which united us, but the things that were specific to particular individuals or regions, and the differences in

experience, perspective and emphasis, which could amount to disagreement, as well as leading to enlargement of understanding.

As the week progressed, participants from the South and East began to find a unified voice, defined mostly be their relationship to the North and West. At the same time, differences between their own continental perspectives became increasingly apparent. There were also some potentially quite difficult issues between individuals in relation to plans for our party on the final evening - differences over alcohol and money. Perhaps because we had set out to create a group ethos in which differences were seen as interesting and useful to look at, these minor frictions generated no major conflict or ill will; nor did the quite justifiable rumblings against the North Western weighting of the planning group generate enough energy for the take-over I had encouraged. But the surfacing of these differences, for instance in one long simulation exercise, was important for the deepening of our knowledge of each other and our understanding of the challenges entailed in any attempt to develop a multi-cultural understanding of nonviolence and conflict resolution.

One member of the Neve Shalom/ Wahat al Salam community (an Israeli), who was a participant in our group, described her educational work with Palestinian and Israeli youngsters. She said that at the beginning of their stay at the centre they, especially the Israelis, would be eager to emphasise their sameness, reluctant to acknowledge differences. In this situation the Israelis would, reflecting political relationships, tend to dominate. But as time went on, the differences would begin to emerge, and separate group work would provide the opportunity for their elaboration, so that eventually, through tension and conflict, participants would reach a greater understanding of each other's reality, power relations would change, and a deeper meeting point would be reached. All of which echoes our experiences in Geneva and confirms my understanding of respect as requiring an acknowledgement of differences and the exercise of challenge.

Culture and values

Much of our discussion during the week centred on the values necessary to nonviolent relationships and community. 'Respect' was perhaps the value most frequently mentioned, and, for Latin American participants and for those of us who came from North America and Europe, 'justice' went with it. The participant from Ecuador spoke

of the necessity to respect and meet young people's basic human needs if they were to grow up as respectful members of society. The Chileans were concerned with human rights at all levels: emotional, political and economic. Although I do not recall hearing the word 'justice' used by the Asians, it was implicit in much of what they said. Anna from Sri Lanka had a passionate concern that the equal dignity of all citizens should be respected in the treatment they received in society, regardless of their religion, caste or ethnicity. Mary's work with Indian women was designed to encourage a sense of self-worth, together with a knowledge of personal rights and increased economic power. Sarah from Nepal was concerned to help women and tribal peoples in her country to emerge from oppression. The oppressive nature of tribal structures was a major theme in relation to Niger. And throughout our conversations about reconciliation and its requirements, questions of justice and restoration recurred.

The concept of justice and themes of empowerment and liberation struggle are central to the tradition of nonviolence, but they are often absent from the discourse of 'conflict resolution'. To me it seems clear that 'struggle' and 'resolution' are not, or should not be, competing approaches to violence and conflict, but ideally different phases or options expressing one approach, both founded on the value of respect. A concern to articulate the relationship between the two, and the importance of power relations was what prompted the development of the 'snake' model. It seems to me important that 'conflict resolution' not be confused, in theory or practice, with pacification, as opposed to the search for genuine peace: peace with justice.

My own values and beliefs: doubt and acceptance

Before I went to Israel my challenging (and Judi's) of my 'martyr syndrome' had taken me into a fundamental crisis of belief about nonviolence. The philosophy as I had received and incorporated it was based on Biblical ideas of 'the suffering servant' and the redemptive power of suffering and self-sacrifice. Having always been worried and impressed by Jesus' call to perfection (which I had latterly tried to mitigate by thinking of it in its Latin sense of 'completion'), I had been troubled by recent reading which asserted that Gandhi considered his life's mission to have failed because of a lack of purity. I had begun to feel that any recipe for life that required purity was doomed to failure, and that to be realistic, indeed compassionate, it was necessary to accept human beings as they are, be less stern and exacting. I had recalled a quotation from Bertolt Brecht,

'Even the hatred

of squalor

Makes the brow

grow stern.

Even anger against

injustice

Makes the voice

grow harsh.

Alas we

Who wished to lay

the foundations of

kindness

Could not

Ourselves be kind.'

- only I wanted to add, 'to ourselves'.

I was afraid that when I met up with colleagues in Israel I would find I no longer shared in the beliefs of what had been for so long my family of belief, would be repelled by their too demanding enthusiasm. In the event I felt none of these things, only encouragement to think that good things were possible, and (from my journal)

> 'a conviction that we need more kindness, love, laughter, courage, and that it's still me to want to be part of that, even when it's a struggle; but not to the point of sternness: including myself in kindness and tolerance, seeing my weaknesses as a chance for someone else's strength, myself as a possible part of an 'answer', not the sole provider, one in a billion carriers, not *the* carrier.'

As I think and write about these questions, with all my self-doubts and doubts, I feel that I do have a contribution to make in this field, both as a practitioner and a thinker. I also realise that what I have to offer (which is myself) cannot be other than a product of my own culture, with all its assumptions, biases and limitations. When I work as a trainer, I do so by invitation, in a 'workshop' - a particularly sub-cultural invention - and I can only assume that those I work with will choose their own level of participation, and reject any ideas of mine that they find unhelpful.

A particular moment in one lunchtime conversation helped me in my struggle for self-acceptance. It was a three way conversation, between me, a German and an Indian. We were discussing cultural sensitivity and respect. The Indian described an encounter with a Palestinian in which he had been unsure of the meaning of something the other had said - and furthermore unsure whether it would be acceptable to ask for clarification. I very tentatively asked him whether it would have been possible for him to explain his dilemma to the Palestinian - at which the German exclaimed, 'That sounds very English!' 'Of course it's very English,' I retorted. 'I am English'. Then the Indian said slowly, 'Yes, I think I could have done that. I wish I'd thought of it.' As a matter of fact, I do not think that what I had suggested was very English. What matters is that I, being myself English, had had an idea to offer which seemed useful across cultures.

It has come to me also that my own tendency to self-doubt is something I probably should simply accept as part of who I am and one which can be useful, protecting me, and therefore others, from over-confidence, or arrogance - cultural or otherwise, and lack of self-challenge. Combined with the passion that I feel, it seems to make for real communication. For instance, when at the end of our week together I went to lead a workshop with young Palestinians, I was so afraid of seeming to underestimate their suffering or offer simplistic 'solutions,' yet so deeply hoping that a way forward was possible, that I presented what I had to offer in such a way that they really welcomed it and engaged with it - and asked for more.

Eva Hoffman, in her autobiographical book, 'Lost in Translation', (1991: 276) having given a profound and detailed account of the personal impact of migration from one culture and one language to another, concludes that there is an essence within the individual which lies beyond culture: 'This is the point to which I have tried to triangulate, this private place, this unassimilable part of myself. We all need to find this place in order to know that we exist not only within culture but also outside it.' This makes sense to me, rings true. I want to feel comfortable within that place myself; and is it possible that one of the most powerful and important things that training can do is to help participants discover that place for themselves? Is it also possible that communication at a profound level can take place between people even of very different cultures, if they can speak or otherwise communicate from and to that place? More specifically, can respect, if it comes from the heart, make itself felt even without words, or in spite of the wrong ones, or other cultural blunders? Is it something beyond concepts and words and world views?

I ask these questions not to excuse wanton ignorance or carelessness, or the failure to look for local partners to work with when one is working outside of one's own cultural context: only to express the profound but tentative hope, or still more tentative belief, that there really is such a thing as 'our common humanity', which can be felt, and which can both generate respect and make its communication possible.

Cross-cultural (and counter-cultural) conflict resolution (or nonviolence) training is bound to involve conflict at some level - the uncomfortable effects of one way of seeing or doing things clashing with another. In my understanding, conflict is a normal and potentially productive part of life whereby we learn and change. So it is with training. A facilitator of learning should not be afraid of conflict per se - including cultural conflict; but she or he should be aware of the impact of power relations and take care not to abuse the 'trainer' position. For me, so far in my research, 'respect' holds good, both as a core theme and value for those wishing to approach conflict nonviolently, and as a focal point for cultural differences and dilemmas. It also seems the litmus test and only real safeguard for acceptable cross-cultural training.'

Summary of the contribution of these intercontinental workshops to my research

These workshops in Switzerland and Israel/ Palestine, because of the wide range of cultures that were represented in them, gave me a great deal of relevant experience and stimulus for my research. They revealed interesting and important aspects of cultural difference and, particularly in the case of the second workshop, brought into focus the part played by history and power relations in intercultural dynamics, and the consequent difficulty of establishing relationships of mutual respect. In both workshops, in different ways, questions of power were played out in matters of control and decision making.

In the first Geneva workshop, as well as experiencing some real challenges to my groundedness and respect as a facilitator, I had an ideal opportunity to test my justice-peace, ANV-CR theoretical 'package' (which I used again in the Graduate School). In Israel, in a group already committed to nonviolent struggle for justice, my theoretical learning was in the area of reconciliation: how it is understood and what it requires from different cultural viewpoints.

In both situations, organisational gaps created unintended pressure, which provided the stimulus for an exploration of the limits of personal choice and responsibility. In Geneva, working with George had helped me to see these things in perspective. In Israel, I had gone with the intention of learning about the exercise of self-care, and had learned a great deal about the complexity and difficulties; but I had also learned a great deal about self-acceptance, and had managed somehow to position myself in the world. This was, I think reflected in the more relaxed, exploratory style of my account.

In Geneva, cultural differences made themselves felt, and at the same time were transcended by the shared culture of Christianity. At Neve Shalom there was no common religion, but, as I now realise, a shared commitment to the philosophy of nonviolence played a comparable transcultural role. The workshops in my next chapter were, in terms of participants, less culturally diverse, but brought together people with no equivalent unifying commitment, and with much political cause for division.