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. . . Dealing With Peacekeepers

Armed Humanitarian Peacekeeping: Opportunity, Dilemma or Barrier for MCC Work?

by Bob Herr

Working alongside soldiers in the midst of war is a tremendous challenge for peace-seeking Christians. But this has been part of MCC's experience from the beginning, and so struggling with how to work in these tragic situations has been both a reason for having MCC and a source of intense moral struggle.

This particular thread of experience continues. After World War II, MCC workers collaborated closely with the occupying forces in Germany. Food distribution, shelter and transportation all depended to some extent on association with these forces. Accounts could be provided of more recent experience in Africa, Asia or Latin America. When war creates havoc and disruption, aiding helpless and needy people becomes practical and immediate. Reflection on the meaning of it all is often put off until later.

But today it seems there are also some new developments. In the past military forces were sent out unabashedly for warmaking. Defeating the enemy, at whatever cost, was the goal. In the course of pursuing this goal, humanitarian objectives could be included only if time and material allowed. But what if military forces claim their goal, their primary goal, is a humanitarian one: not to pursue war but to provide safety, stability and protection for innocent people? If today's international military forces take up humanitarian missions, how then do we as pacifist Christians cooperate? Can we support this kind of thing?

Because these questions have come up repeatedly during the past seven years, the Peace Office and Peace Committee decided to give some time to careful reflection. By doing this we acknowledge that there is perhaps some unique struggle here. If the answers were clear, we would just move ahead and do our work. But answers have often been hard to grasp, and the more we struggled with work in Somalia, in Haiti, in Bosnia and most recently in Eastern Zaire, the more we became aware of the need to think again about our presence as followers of Christ in these situations.

In October 1996 the MCC Peace Committee met to hear from several MCC workers who had direct and prolonged experience in Bosnia, Haiti and Burundi. In April 1997 the Committee spent time looking at this experience. Several Committee members led in theological discussion and reflection.

This issue of the *Peace Office Newsletter* brings together an account of this study process. In reading it we hope you will gain insight on the struggle people face in this work, where the issues at first seem clear and simple, but may shift on closer scrutiny. In these situations our involvement "In the name of Christ" can take on a meaning not evident at first glance.

Bob Herr is co-director of the MCC Peace Office.

While I agree with Ted that the fundamental calling is to positive peace, I think we also have a calling to help those in authority to find and to choose methods which rely less on force than the current and prevailing military ethic drives them to do. Supporting U.N.-mandated actions that restrain the exercise of force by major powers, which is typically in defense of their own interests, is a way we can helpfully move the public exercise of authority in these matters in progressive directions.

—Ernie Regehr (MCC Peace Committee member)

Some are willing to say that in circumstances where I don't have a specific [nonviolent] alternative to propose, I will nevertheless condemn you, morally condemn you for pursuing this policy. I am not willing to say that.

—Ted Koontz

The Peacekeeper Debate in Perspective

by Ted Koontz

My assignment is to do some updating on discussions and to identify outstanding issues concerning international military peacekeeping, particularly issues touching on theological and ethical concerns.

I want to note that we are dealing with the periphery here, not with the heart of our calling as Christian peacemakers. We have a good deal more clarity when we are talking about more central issues.

The essays that appeared in the Mennonite press following the December 1992 intervention in Somalia established the framework for the issues that remain with us. The discussion began with an article by J. R. Burkholder and Ted Koontz, "When armed force is used to make relief work possible" (*Gospel Herald,* January 12, 1993). The essay served as a kind of foil to which various people reacted.

Following are the main points of this article:

1. The primary calling of the church is to *positive peacemaking* . . . to respond directly to human need and injustice while working at building just and nonviolent structures that make for peace.

2. Superior military force can, in fact, bring about the end of armed conflict, leading to negative peace [the absence of open conflict].

3. As pacifist Christians who have refused to participate in warfare, we have also often stated our prophetic judgment against those who use military force. . . . Very often violence does not contribute even to negative peace.

4. We recognize, however, that one task of government is to keep negative peace.

5. We are troubled that the United States is once again trying to run the world. . . . Yet at the same time, we recognize that this effort is widely supported and is not carried out against the will of the Somali people.

6. This particular military action seems to many to be much more justified than most we have seen in the years since the "good war," World War II.

7. Thus the Yugoslav and Somali situations give rise to uneasiness among pacifists. It is not obvious that rejecting military intervention would create a more peaceful situation. . . .

8. Perhaps it is time to think again about some kind of dualism. . . . Whatever legitimacy government may claim . . . , it would surely include the need to preserve life, to protect the innocent.

9. But we also believe that as pacifist Christians, military action is not our calling.

10. As Mennonites we do not need to make a forced choice. . . . This may be *a time for silence*. . . . But this is also *a time for action*. . . . We need to unite in support of positive peacemaking efforts.

Responses

The first published response was an article in the *Mennonite Reporter* by Marv Frey and Ed Epp, "Are We Being Swayed by a CNN Theology of Peace?" They first raise the question: Can violence ever be justified? They feel that our article provided justification for violence. They note that military interventions throughout history have been justified on humanitarian grounds, and ask what criteria separate good from bad interventions. Who decides if the criteria have been met? Is our theology today being decided by images chosen by the news networks?

Second, they ask, Why do nations want to intervene? Rather than accepting at face value the humanitarian rationale, they wonder

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if the Somalia action had more to do with American interests. They fear that this type of humanitarian effort will be used to justify larger military budgets. We should be willing to risk being marginalized when we publicly condemn reliance on force to solve the world's problems.

J. Lawrence Burkholder expresses another perspective in a *Gospel Herald* article, "The dark side of responsible love" (March 16, 1993). Burkholder states that there is not a completely good alternative in the Somalia situation, and talks about how silence would have the effect of prolonging the suffering and causing more people to die of starvation—pitting pacifism against humanitarianism.

He continues, "The purpose of military peacekeeping is simply to bring about a condition within which all kinds of peacemaking may take place. After all, nothing constructive can be done in a condition of anarchy."

He also notes the problem of supporting a military action that as a pacifist he is unwilling to partake in. But Burkholder states that this same problem is with us when anyone who would not do police work on principle calls on the police for protection. We constantly face situations of ambiguity precisely because our love for suffering people draws us into places of violence and anarchy. And as a result we find ourselves relying on God's grace and forgiveness. There is a fundamental tension between our humanitarian impulses and our pacifist impulses.

Burkholder also wrote "On Ambiguity," published around the same time (*Peace Office Newsletter,* May-June 1993). In this essay he describes how ambiguous and difficult all of our alternatives are in many situations and writes, "Even pacifism is ambiguous if universalized in an evil world. Nonresistance, if made an absolute rule, is anarchistic."

J. Denny Weaver joins the dialogue in an essay entitled "We must continue to reject just war thinking" (*Gospel Herald,* April 27, 1993). He is concerned that the Burkholder-Koontz article and the first article by J. Lawrence Burkholder reflect a seduction by humanitarian language that is dangerous to our peace position. He asserts that Christians should never condone violence, and that the arguments in these articles are another form of the just war theory. He sees the articles as a first compromise that would inevitably lead to more justification of violence to save people from evil things.

What does Weaver recommend? Support mediation and conciliation to build peace capacity using traditional leaders. Send 30,000 nonviolent warriors into Somalia instead of soldiers. He closes by noting that the complexities there defy easy nonviolent solutions, but that the same is true for violent solutions. We ought not to focus on success as the ultimate argument for nonviolence, but rather on our faith.

Another article in the May-June 1993 *Peace Office Newsletter,* "U.N. Military Enforcement Action: Should Mennonites Condemn it?", by William Janzen, adds to the discussion. Janzen talks about developments within the U.N. to develop and strengthen peacekeeping and peacemaking operations, and then addresses the specific question, What about enforcement units that take action for peacemaking purposes? He is "not willing to condemn the concept categorically." He says,

> Clearly the primary emphasis must be on stopping the flow of weapons and on promoting dialogue. But should all force be ruled out? In Cambodia, in the present context, the arguments for certain enforcement actions to squeeze Khmer Rouge supply lines and to protect the people are hard to refute.

While this puts him in tension with many of his Mennonite friends, Janzen notes that Mennonites have often benefited from the military or police protection of the government.

Doesn't support for any military intervention push you to choose between two very unfortunate alternatives? You can say, as has been said before in the Mennonite tradition, "It's okay for you to do violent acts that I can't do, and I want to encourage you to do them, but don't expect me to do them." That's a position I think you are uncomfortable with. Or you can say, "I encourage you to do these violent acts, and if you need more help, I will help you." I am equally uncomfortable with this position.

—Harry Huebner

Organizational statements

Mennonite agencies including Mennonite Central Committee have addressed the issue with formal statements.

A 1993 statement from the Mennonite Church General Assembly, "Peace in Our Time," begins by acknowledging that

> Despite our lack of consensus on how to respond to government or U.N. use of military force in certain cases, we as a Mennonite people must reclaim and restate our priorities as Christians who are given "the ministry of reconciliation."

The first point is that we need to refuse participation in activities that train us in the art of killing, no matter how attractive such training might appear in some circumstances. Second, we need to confess that our peace witness has too often amounted to little more than negative refusal to kill. We have to broaden our peace witness and bring it closer to home to include things like sexual abuse and domestic violence. Third, we know that nationalism feeds the forces that make for war and we call on all Christians to affirm their first loyalty to the kingdom of God, rather than to any nation. Fourth, we commit ourselves to pursue the things which make for peace in positive, active roles that will broaden the scope of our war refusal. We confess that we do not have immediate nonviolent

solutions to all conflicts that may spiral into wars, but often alternatives exist or can be created.

The statement identifies peacemaking work such as conciliation and mediation to create nonviolent alternatives; addressing injustice, poverty and oppression which are the seedbeds of violence; and calling on the U.S. and Canadian governments to reduce the sale of arms around the world and to deploy national resources toward providing food, clothing and shelter, employment, and medical care for peoples of the world instead.

In summary, the Mennonite Church General Assembly says we don't have consensus on how to address the public policy questions, but we ought to be about the things we can agree on.

There is also a series of Mennonite Central Committee policy statements responding to these difficult questions. The first, "A statement on food and peace in Somalia," from December 1992, essentially says that MCC is not willing to support intervention by troops to help make distribution of food possible. MCC did not join the calls at that time by many NGOs for increased armed intervention to protect relief efforts. While these calls grew out of a sense of compassion for others, MCC felt that hasty, short-term intervention would have a deleterious effect on longer-term work for a solution.

In July 1994, MCC responded to the question of military intervention in Haiti by saying that

> such an intervention will negatively impact the lives of Haitian people for decades to come. . . . As Christian pacifists we oppose the use of military force to bring about social change. . . . Armed force achieves little and makes long-term peace and development difficult to achieve. . . . The occupation of Haiti by U.N. forces as currently envisioned by planners of a military intervention would almost certainly be seen as undesirable by the people of Haiti.

Some of these statements were contradicted by the events that unfolded, but that was the position that was taken at that point.

MCC released an editorial piece by their UN liaison, John Rempel, "New directions in United Nations peacekeeping initiatives," in October 1994. This includes one of the few MCC comments on Cambodia. Rempel acknowledges that "the U.N.'s presence in Cambodia has made possible the end of its civil war," despite the moral ambiguities of the use of force.

In a November 30, 1995, background discussion commentary called "Peace in Bosnia," prepared by the MCC Overseas Peace Office, there is a statement that

> MCC stands in the Anabaptist tradition, which has affirmed for over 400 years the calling of Christians to be peacemakers and to forego the use of violence. In addition, this tradition recognizes the role of governments in ordering society. Obviously, we hope such ordering can be done in peaceful ways, without the use of violence. But our world is an imperfect place and so governments have a special responsibility to restrain evil. Restraining evil in Bosnia, where society has disintegrated and become chaotic, calls for a response from the international community. In doing this Peacekeepers have a role to play, but it is a role that demands care and caution. Any intervention . . . which seeks to reach a lasting peace needs to be sustainable over a long term.

The statement expresses the fear that the peacekeeping force might be pressured to withdraw before stability has been achieved. It urges humanitarian relief efforts to distance themselves from heavily armed international soldiers.

MCC and the Friends Committee on National Legislation issued a "Joint Statement on Burundi" in July 1996. The statement argues that there is no good basis for military intervention in Burundi. Further, it would not be possible to operate there effectively, given the diffuseness of the conflict and the fact that any force interjected there would likely be identified with one side and would simply become embroiled in the ongoing conflicts.

Most recently, MCC issued "The Crisis in Zaire," a December 10, 1996, commentary by the Peace Office and the Africa Department. The statement refers to the numerous calls for both civilian and military international assistance, as well as to the 400-year Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition of calling Christians to be peacemakers. The statement recognizes the role of public authorities to provide order in society, and calls for an immediate humanitarian response to the chaos, anarchy and civil war in eastern Zaire. MCC believes the job of getting food and other supplies to displaced people

> can be done most effectively without outside military assistance, relying on negotiated access with currently functioning authorities. . . . The role of an international military rescue mission may be useful in certain locations. However, we feel this role should be restricted to protecting refugee and displaced people, following negotiated agreements.

What are the issues?

Let me try to identify some of the issues, beginning with some important areas of agreement:

1. We ought to focus on working at prevention, on being ahead of the curve in positive peacemaking, at creating nonviolent alternatives which will be feasible when times of crisis come, or which will help avert times of crisis. While we spend a lot of our energy debating this issue related to intervention, of whether to sanction or whether to condemn or be silent about intervention, we are agreed that this debate is a tiny fraction of what MCC ought to be about.

2. We are also agreed that we ought to be calling others, including governments and the United Nations, to work more at peaceful initiatives for dealing with all kinds of conflicts, including the use of unarmed forces and focused sanctions. Sanctions ought to be focused on the elite, and ought not to be so broad that they hurt the people at the bottom.

3. There is also a broad consensus that we support strengthening the United Nations and the international community more generally, though with some awareness of how those systems can easily be dominated and

manipulated by the great powers, particularly by the United States.

I also have some questions for our ongoing agenda in these issues:

How new really is this whole debate?

I am struck by the fact that we face the same challenges to faithfulness that we often faced before in different guises: the issue of the self-defense units among Russian Mennonites, and the question of how to respond to Hitler.

On the opposite side, it seems to me we faced some of the same questions in the experience of the inter-war years between World War I and World War II when there was very widespread interest in peace, almost universally in the western world, parallel to the current focus on peace concerns. There often has been a tension between war refusal and involvement in peace advocacy, and the tension comes to a head when peace advocacy doesn't yield the results that one hoped it would. When the liberal pacifists of the 20s were confronted with the rise of Nazi power in Germany, they essentially left the peace position to a remnant of traditional pacifists.

Now the support for interventions often comes from our progressive friends with whom we have had close relationships in the past. I would suggest that the same was true for progressive Mennonites in the 20s and 30s. They saw their progressive friends shift to saying, "Well, we've got to stop Hitler."

How new is all of this and how do we think about it in relation to our history?

What about dualism and monism in our thinking about all of these issues?

That is, how do we think about the responsibilities of governments in relation to our responsibilities as Christians and how we think normatively about these questions?

The tension that has pushed pacifists toward a two-kingdom way of thinking is the need to acknowledge the role of force in keeping order in an imperfect and sinful world, and at the same time, to say that as Christians we are called to find other possibilities. How do we think about the church and our calling in relationship to government and its calling?

What is reality and how is it to be read?

I think it is a critical point. People like J. Lawrence Burkholder have a different image of how the world operates than people like Denny Weaver, or like Epp and Frey in their piece. And Ernie Regehr, I think, has yet a different perception. This is reflected in the evaluations that different ones have of Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Cambodia. In other words, we won't resolve all of our differences simply by resolving our theological differences. We also have a kind of analytical scheme that comes to bear on how we read what's going on in the world.

Are peacekeeping interventions military functions, or are they police functions?

Some are suggesting that if it's a police action, that's a different matter and it's more acceptable than if it is a military action. What difference does this make? Is the issue that police operate under legitimate authority and so we accept their violence, or is the issue that police are less violent or can often operate nonviolently in comparison to military forces?

When do we speak and when do we remain silent?

Our minutes from the April 8, 1996, Peace Committee meeting say, "We sense some consensus that in MCC advocacy and statements, we will not encourage or explicitly support the use of military force, but this means that there may be many situations in which we will not be able to speak." Are we satisfied with not being able to speak? Do we think that some of the statements that have been made have gone a little bit beyond this borderline of saying, "We will not encourage or explicitly support the use of military force"?

We've got a lot of conceptual work to do in clarifying terms.

What do we mean by *violence?* What do we mean by *coercion?* What do we mean by *force?* What do we mean by *power?* A lot of ambiguity is covered over by vague uses of these terms or by different uses of these terms by different writers.

How do we understand God and God's nature?

Is God a pacifist? If God is a pacifist, then presumably we are called to be pacifists. If God is not a pacifist, and I find powerful biblical warrant including the words of Jesus to suggest that God isn't a pacifist, does that necessarily imply that we ought not to be pacifists or that we need not be pacifists?

From which direction do we see the primary dangers to pacifist conviction?

If we lose pacifist conviction in the next 30 or 40 years, why will that happen? Will this loss come from acknowledging that we don't always have nonviolent solutions and therefore should not condemn governments but rather should hold to our separate calling as Christians, which seems to give a wedge for the acknowledgement of violence, or from emphasizing our responsibility to participate in and affirm viable solutions to the world's political problems?

Ted Koontz is Professor of Peace Studies at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana.

I think that a meaningful distinction between police activity and military activity is that police activity is defined and restricted for the purpose of bringing the parties to a nonviolent forum for resolution, whereas military activity is designed to resolve the thing through force. Police action is designed to bring it to the courts. Police "bring people to justice." An international peacekeeping intervention uses force in order to restore political process, [but war] uses force in order to replace political process.

—Ernie Regehr

Case Study: Bosnia/Serbia

by Mark Jantzen

Josip Broz Tito, the ruler of Yugoslavia beginning in 1945, exercised a brokering function between the regions of the country. He dealt with power struggles and aspirations of the regions that later became independent countries by playing them off against each other politically or when necessary by brute force. When Tito died this brokering function died with him, setting the stage for long-submerged conflicts to be played out.

After a new constitution was implemented in 1974, the Communist Party was more strongly regionalized.

Harry Huebner: In the case of the [young mission workers in Albania] being rescued by the military, I would be extremely bothered by that if the military had to kill 500 people in order to do that. Then I would consider it to be an utter tragedy. Now if in fact the military was there and the people were somehow rescued and nobody got killed, of course it is a miracle. It's great! Let's praise God. Why is that a problem?

Ted Koontz: Maybe it is a problem if you think that there shouldn't be U.S. troops in Albania to begin with, because they shouldn't be there intervening.

Bob Herr: I guess the problem is that they were prepared to kill the local people—they were armed to do that.

Harry Huebner: Then the miracle is in the fact that they didn't need to. Did people have to die? Or did people die in the progress [of the rescue]?

Jeanne Rempel (MCC Peace Committee member): People didn't die. I think the ambivalence of the people who were rescued was more that they were rescued with a big show by an outside government, and that they left behind Albanian folks who could not be so rescued.

The "president" of the country was actually a committee formed by the presidents or governors of the six republics and two autonomous regions that made up the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

A loss of economic power in the 1980s and a falling standard of living in Yugoslavia increased tensions. Following Tito's death in 1980, regional elite leadership within the country looked for ways to expand their own power bases. With the perceived weakness of the federal government's leadership, they began to contemplate declaring independence to expand their regions into independent states. They readily accepted the risk of war to implement these plans. Thus war came when Croatia and Bosnia seceded from Yugoslavia. Although Serbia technically remained within the old Yugoslav political structure, the ruling elite there did as much as any other to undermine federal authority.

MCC's work in former Yugoslavia

Mennonite Central Committee has been involved in Yugoslavia for 25 years. The earliest projects related directly to the churches in theological education.

Following the declarations of independence and the resulting war between Croatia and Serbia, MCC believed it was important to place workers on both sides of this conflict. The theological education work in Croatia was continued while two workers were placed in Serbia to do relief work under a local organization, Bread of Life.

Later efforts in Serbia included peace education and publishing a local version of an MCC poster: "Let the Christians of the world agree not to kill." The impact of MCC's work was limited by the fact that Bread of Life is identified firmly with evangelicals in Serbia, who are effectively marginalized in Serbian society.

Bosnian views of the multinational force

On the positive side, most people in Bosnia appreciated these aspects of the international military occupation following the Dayton Accords:

- People were overjoyed that the shooting had finally stopped.
- The UN presence injects a lot of hard currency into the local economy.
- International troops were able to reduce the banditry associated with local gangs and paramilitary groups.
- The UN troops were seen as providing a certain level of guarantee that signers of the Dayton Accords would refrain from renewing the fighting.
- Foreign troops have a tripwire function wherein any attack on NATO soldiers will bring massive attention and likely retaliation.

There were also negative perceptions of the peacekeeping forces:

- Bosnians in general did not like the feeling of being invaded again by outside forces.
- Bosnian Croats and Muslims viewed the international force as too neutral, and wished for an intervention that would reverse perceived injustices.
- The forces included too many people with easy answers that were inadequate to the complex structural and historical issues.
- Local people did not like the implication that only outsiders could fix their problems.

Questions that need to be considered

I have these questions about the intervention in former Yugoslavia:

- How can disparate goals be reconciled or accomplished simultaneously? Is the intervention

temporary or long-term? Is it an external agenda (to secure Clinton's re-election) or an internal one (to create space for other work to go on)?

- What do you do when people are hungry and you're trying to get them food in a militarized situation? Is it legitimate to use troops for this purpose?

- How can we guarantee the end use of relief supplies in a war situation?

- Can we help local partners see a vision beyond the Band-Aid of relief work?

- Local people continue to believe they can't have any influence over their own government and society. Does the international force in some way reinforce this?

- Are general economic sanctions as imposed against Serbia the best type of sanctions? Such sanctions adversely affect the weakest elements of society while the elites responsible for pursing the war remain largely unaffected.

- The international forces have taken over some functions of the local police forces. Should the question regarding their deployment be framed with reference to police action rather than military action? Does this make a difference?

At the same time as I ask these questions, I feel ambivalent because the people of former Yugoslavia are so united in favor of the end of the fighting, which is seen as a direct result of the intervention. It is hard to imagine what other intervention would have earned their trust to bring them out of a dreadful situation. But there were missed opportunities along the way.

At a political level, several alternatives to military intervention did exist. When the crisis was brewing in the late 1980s, the West could have used the promise of debt relief for the Yugoslav federal government as a carrot to promote democracy, national reconciliation and economic reforms. The arguments over which republics should be responsible for what share of the national debt exacerbated the national conflicts.

As the crisis heated up, Western governments turned to dealing with the politicians in the former Yugoslavia who were whipping up hatred, and ignored the less popular figures who were calling for peace. This pattern has largely continued, with foreign ministers and special envoys from the West visiting only the ruling nationalist parties instead of honoring more responsible opposition parties with a request for consultation during every visit.

Finally, a real chance to end the fighting was missed because the West did not support the thousands of soldiers, particularly Bosnian Serbs, who refused to serve in the armies fighting in Bosnia. An open appeal for Bosnian Serb army deserters to come and enjoy political asylum in the United States would have attracted thousands of takers and greatly weakened the Bosnian Serb army.

In keeping with MCC's much more modest means, MCC peace work is centered around developing partnerships with Christians working to alleviate suffering on several sides of the conflict. These partners are interested in using the MCC framework to address longer-term issues of reconciliation. Having an international partner like MCC helps facilitate communication and cooperation across the remaining barriers of hostility.

Unfortunately, the greatest stumbling block to implementing this strategy is that people have been slow to apply for the three MCC positions in former Yugoslavia. At press time, a year after this presentation was made, two of the three had been filled.

Mark Jantzen and his wife, Alice Hartman Jantzen, served 1993–1996 with Mennonite Central Committee in Belgrade, Serbia.

Case Study: Haiti

by Kathleen Kern

On the day the U.S. Special Forces landed in Haiti, Joel and I followed the crowds down to the military headquarters. We found a group of sweaty and exhausted men lying within the compound, trying to appear oblivious to the hundreds of cheering Haitians nearby.

Eventually a couple of the soldiers noticed us and came over to talk. The Haitians around us shot questions at them: How many soldiers had come? How long would they stay? Had they brought Aristide with them? After Joel had translated their terse responses, Jim, one of the soldiers, asked us why we were in Haiti. We told him that Christian Peacemaker Teams had set up a violence-deterring presence in St. Helene and was doing human rights monitoring in the area. He told us he would stop by sometime.

"We'll be living with the Haitian military here," Jim said. "We need to talk to someone who knows what the people are really thinking."

Thus began our relationship with the U.S. military and thus began many long, emotional discussions within the team over the propriety of that relationship.

Responding to the dilemmas

Our four-person team held four opinions. One maintained that we should have nothing to do with them, given the history of U.S. military intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean. Any contact with the soldiers would diminish our peace witness, she thought.

Another asserted that we should avoid the U.S. military and make it clear to our Haitian friends that we

Once you say that there is no alternative to living with ambiguities, which we would probably all say, you open yourself to an enormous range of responses, most of which lead to some kind of an ethical parameter that is an expression of the just war theory.

—John Rempel

Is enforcement action the same as peacekeeping? The two should not be confused. U.N. peacekeeping has traditionally relied on the consent of opposing parties and involves the deployment of peacekeepers to implement an agreement approved by those parties.

In the case of enforcement action, the Security Council gives Member States the authority to take all necessary measures to achieve a stated objective. Consent of the parties is not necessarily required. It has been used in very few cases—in the Korean conflict in 1950, and more recently following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, in Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania. None of these enforcement operations was under U.N. control. Instead they were directed by a single country or a group of countries.

The United Nations Charter provisions on the maintenance of international peace and security are the basis for both peacekeeping and enforcement action, but they are very different forms of intervention.

—United Nations pamphlet, "Peacekeeping at a Glance"

viewed U.S. militarism as an evil institution. However, she was cordial to individual GIs who happened to pass by.

Another felt that since our Haitian friends had asked us to serve as translators with the military, refusal would show a lack of solidarity.

The fourth team member believed that the more contact we had with the U.S. soldiers, the better we could serve as peace witnesses to them and the more information we could gather about their intentions.

The tension between our own nonviolent agenda and the Haitians' agenda also created confusion. The priority of St. Helene residents was how they could best be protected, not how they could best be a model for nonviolent direct action. When the news came that the Americans would arrive in Jeremie within the week, one of our co-workers expressed hope that the U.S. military might establish a command post in nearby St. Helene.

When we asked the local priest whether we should tell the American soldiers to leave their guns outside the church, he said they could have their guns in the church as long as they used them to protect rather than oppress people.

We felt deflated when we heard these things, because the people of St. Helene had told us that our unarmed presence had deterred violence. Yet none of us felt comfortable questioning the wishes of people who had borne political oppression and death threats with grace for three years.

There were internal paradoxes when our pacifist convictions came up against our emotional desire for the people's suffering to end. Each time the radio brought news that an invasion was likely, we shared in the expectation and hope of our Haitian friends. Each time the junta called the United States's bluff and the invasion was canceled, we shared in their discouragement and anger. We knew that the U.S. legislators who really cared about democracy in Haiti were calling for an invasion. Those who would have been just as happy for Haiti to become a slave labor colony had adopted uncharacteristic non-interventionist policies.

I was strangely elated when I saw the helicopters come to scout out landing places around Jeremie. I understood why the people were dancing and singing. I wanted to celebrate with them.

I also felt good about the translating we did for the people of St. Helene. Two days before massive nationwide demonstrations that commemorated the 5,000 coup victims, we helped to facilitate an honest dialogue between upper echelon American officers in Jeremie and organizers of the local demonstration. Jim, the soldier I had met earlier, told me afterward that his commanders had left the meeting knowing better who the "good guys" were in Jeremie.

But I never forgot that all the Special Forces soldiers had been trained to become disciplined and efficient killers. In no way could the demonstration in Jeremie be termed nonviolent, given that every soldier carried about sixty pounds of weaponry. If the organizers from St. Helene had not monitored the march so carefully, paramilitaries could have infiltrated it and instigated violence. Jim and the others would have shot those whom they viewed as perpetrators without thinking twice.

I also saw the potential for abuse of power the longer the U.S. forces remained in Haiti. It seemed that the Americans responded more quickly to the complaints of the military and paramilitaries against ordinary citizens than the reverse. We had no illusions that they felt solidarity with those who had suffered oppression, and saw how easily they could be manipulated by the oppressors.

Difficult questions

When I returned from Haiti, I talked to a former MCC worker about our confusing role with the U.S. military. He told me about some North American MCC volunteers he knew who had worked in Vietnam. During the Tet offensive, they had lived in the crawl spaces of their houses for a week, surrounded by North

Vietnamese gunfire. Eventually the U.S. military came to rescue them.

Years later, the MCC volunteers still wondered whether they had done the right thing in letting them do so. Yet, as much as they hated everything the U.S. was doing in Vietnam, they still were grateful that the American soldiers had saved their lives.

The situations in Haiti and Vietnam were different, of course. The majority of Haitians welcomed the U.S. military as deliverers instead of despising them as conquerors. We had not faced the same danger that the MCC workers in Vietnam had. Yet we, too, will continue to struggle with whether we responded appropriately.

Did translating for our Haitian friends make us collaborators with the soldiers? Even though we clearly stated our pacifist convictions to the U.S. Special Forces, did our relationship with them facilitate their delusion that guns are the most effective way of solving problems?

When Palestine was under Roman occupation, Jesus still reached out to the centurion who asked for his help. But there is no record that Jesus collaborated with the Roman military, and we know that it was the Roman military that tortured him to death.

Did we respond to the U.S. soldiers as Jesus would have? How could we have responded more lovingly? How could we have more clearly rejected the violence for which they stood?

Kathleen Kern served with Christian Peacemaker Teams in Haiti in 1994, and more recently was part of a CPT team in Hebron, Palestine.

Case Study: Burundi

by Peter Dula

Many of Africa's postcolonial troubles can be blamed on the way colonial powers artificially created state systems. The arbitrary European boundary drawing lies at the root of many, maybe most African conflicts—so much so that invoking it has become a cliche.

But Burundi and Rwanda (as well as Ethiopia) are exceptions to the rule. All have long pedigrees as archaic kingdoms for centuries before the Europeans arrived. Therefore they seemed better equipped to cope with subsequent crises of legitimacy that have beset so many other African states.

Burundi/Rwanda also confounds the common explanatory recourse to "tribalism." Many are increasingly dubious about the usefulness of the term, and it is definitely misleading in Burundi and Rwanda. "Tribe" connotes a geographic and cultural separateness that simply does not exist between Hutus and Tutsis. Furthermore, they share a language and religion (the contrast with Yugoslavia is noteworthy).

For Burundi, the history of the current conflict begins in 1972, when a hundred thousand Hutus were slain by Tutsis. Many more fled to camps in Tanzania and remained there and constructed an entire ethnic cosmology to give legitimacy to their fear and hatred.

Briefly stated, the Hutus tell a history in which "Hamitic" invaders from the North enslaved the indigenous Bantu. The Tutsis, meanwhile, say that it was all the colonialists' fault and that the Belgians did not merely reshape ethnic divisions but invented them. Hence, the frequent Tutsi insistence that the very words, Hutu and Tutsi, be outlawed.

The truth is that Hutus and Tutsis peacefully commingled for centuries as distinct but rather porous groups. The colonial powers did introduce the vector of disunity and their departure left a power vacuum that was brilliantly filled by the elected Prime Minister Prince Louis Rwagasore, much loved by both Hutu and Tutsi. But his assassination on the eve of independence reopened the vacuum. By 1965 the army was monoethnic (Tutsi) and Hutu leaders had been purged.

In 1972 intense violence broke out after a brief Hutu uprising. The Tutsi backlash killed 100,000 Hutu and sent another 200,000 into exile. Hutus were now systematically excluded from the civil service and university.

For 15 years a relative calm prevailed, belying the deep tensions. In 1988 renewed interethnic conflict sprang up. Nevertheless, Burundi was able to hold fair elections in 1993, when Hutu Melchior Ndadaye was elected president. His assassination in October 1993, just months after his

I think the reason our language is changing is that who Mennonites are as a people has changed significantly. For centuries we have been isolated, and now because we have done relief and development work throughout the world, we have to identify with the people whom we work alongside. Therefore we are almost forced into peacemaking and conflict transformation, if we believe what we say we believe about being called to be peacemakers.

I think we need to acknowledge what MCC has done to us as a people. We are no longer socially, geographically isolated. We are now rubbing shoulders [with suffering people] in areas of conflict throughout the world, and we're being forced to stretch our imaginations and think about mediation, conflict resolution, Christian Peacemaker Teams, sending a nonviolent army throughout the world. We need to acknowledge that we are not the same people—and it's more than just our language.

I think we have to be silent as often as we do because of our lack of experience and our lack of training and our lack of creativity at this point. We're just young in doing this, and I think that as we work at this as a people, we're going to have more creative solutions to offer to governments.

—Jeanne Rempel

election, triggered a slaughter as grievous as that in 1972. Since then Burundi has been engaged in what observers have called a "slow burn civil war."

The United Nations was discussing the deployment of troops in Burundi for several years but it seems unlikely that the political will exists to do so. This is due in part to the ambiguity of objectives. In Somalia, for example, the objective was clear and impartial: Get the food to those who need it.

One of the most frequently invoked justifications for such an intervention is to avoid another Rwanda. But Burundi's steady violence has avoided the sort of explosion that would amount to "another Rwanda" in the eyes of the media. Waiting until that happens, however, would obviously miss the point and prediction is difficult. (Many thought a coup replacing Ndadaye's Hutu successor with a Tutsi would trigger an explosion, but a coup occurred in 1996 and no explosion happened.) This is why many support a force stationed across the lake in the Congo.

An outside force may not be in a position to stop the sort of killing Burundi has known because of two characteristics of the conflict. First, it is not simply rebels versus army but neighbor against neighbor. Second, the random unpredictability of the conflict makes it difficult to counter successfully.

In addition, regardless of what the intervention force did, it would not be seen as impartial. All parties would view it as taking sides.

The Peace Presence Team

Mennonite Central Committee responded to the Rwanda/Burundi crisis by sending a Peace Presence Team to Burundi under the auspices of the Evangelical Friends Church in 1995. The initiative was built on the observation that foreigners were immune from violence and that such a presence often preserved calm in otherwise tense situations. Our hope was to create space for grassroots peace activism through our presence. As our time in Burundi progressed it became less clear that this was the case as attacks on NGOs such as the Red Cross, Oxfam and others became commonplace.

Perhaps the most tangible product of MCC's work was the formulation of local peace committees, places for local leaders, both military and civilian, to meet and dialogue. Much of the violence in Burundi is due to misunderstanding and outright calumny borne of fear and mistrust. The Peace Committees were to be places where the truth could come out and constructive responses to conflict could be imagined.

Too often, however, the Peace Committees became arenas for ethnically based power struggles. Their success or failure could occasionally appear to depend heavily on the disposition of the current commander at the nearby displaced persons camp. We were frequently left wondering if we were doing peace relief instead of peace development.

By the summer of 1996 we were doing neither. No MCCers were in Burundi. The country representatives were forced to spend much of their time in neighboring countries and the last peace presence representatives had to flee. The escalation of conflict made it clear that the volunteers' status as Westerners was no longer sufficient to create the space needed for peacebuilding and occasionally was counterproductive.

Nevertheless, the MCC effort in Burundi has left a lasting legacy and a valuable one. As expendable as we could occasionally seem and as elusive as our goals were, we did succeed in giving hope and encouragement to many. Several of our dear friends are diligently working for peace in various capacities and taking initiative that, in part, springs from the quiet, encouraging MCC activity of empowerment.

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Possible Public Responses to a Specific Call for Armed Humanitarian Intervention

by Martin Shupack

There appears to be a range of public responses that Mennonites conceivably could make in the face of a public call for an armed intervention to a specific humanitarian crisis. Arguments have been made for each of the following options as compatible with some version of Mennonite peace theology.

1. Publicly oppose the intervention because we should always witness against violence in any form for any reason. Our public statement would give the moral basis for opposition to all lethal force, as well as identify, where possible, practical reasons against armed intervention in the specific context. Viable nonviolent alternatives would be presented; but the basic position would not be dependent on our ability to envision these in the particular situation.

2. Publicly oppose the particular intervention on the basis that there are clear nonviolent alternatives that have not been pursued and specific reasons in the context for believing that this intervention will not save lives, but generate even more violence. State our moral opposition to violence and offer practical nonviolent alternatives.

3. Decline to take a public position either way on an armed humanitarian intervention because Christians should concern themselves with building up the community of faith and calling people into the

church, where nonresistance is practiced as God's will. The fallen, rebellious world will make its own decisions and reap its own consequences.

4. Take a public position emphasizing the nonviolent alternatives, which we may be able to see more clearly than others because of our faith. State our moral opposition to violence. But do not necessarily publicly oppose this intervention, because, for one reason or another, we recognize some validity to the notion that the ethics of the kingdom of God may not be directly applicable to the "world."

5. If we cannot honestly point to viable nonviolent alternatives in the present context, refrain from taking a public position either opposing or affirming the intervention—because we cannot say but that this particular intervention may save lives in the circumstances. Renew our commitment to seeking nonviolent solutions to conflict, to mission and service work that nurtures peace and justice in the long run, and accompany the victims in the situation as best we can.

6. In our public statement, place the emphasis on identifying the sins of militarism and greed that have led to the current crisis, while acknowledging that an armed intervention may save lives. If there are no viable nonviolent options in the short term, acknowledge that the nations have sinned themselves into such a corner that armed humanitarian intervention may be the lesser of evils in the situation. God may be able to use this sinful violence to restrain some evil and save lives, though not without ongoing tragic consequences that could have been avoided if earlier messages of peace and justice had been heeded.

7. Publicly affirm as legitimate some armed humanitarian interventions as analogous to the domestic police function to provide order, restrain evildoers and save lives. State that such interventions can serve only to provide the space for authentic peacemaking to occur.

8. Affirm an armed humanitarian intervention undertaken by the state because of the view that it is the government's responsibility—and not the churches' calling—to make these kinds of decisions.

Martin Shupack is legislative associate for international affairs in the MCC Washington Office.

Is there a distinction to be made between being silent and doing nothing? I actually am more comfortable with the notion of finding ourselves so compromised that sometimes we are unable to find a way of doing something that is consistent with our convictions. We just have no options. To be silent, it seems to me, doesn't necessarily follow, because it might be very important under those circumstances to give expression to why it is that we cannot do anything. And I think there is a difference between those two. Being silent implies tacit support, while not being able to do anything, and being vocal about it, does not imply tacit support, but it acknowledges the complexity of the situation in which we cannot in good conscience participate.

—Harry Huebner

The Church Made Strange for the Nations

by Harry Huebner

A key task of the church *vis-a-vis* the nation is to speak its own language, re-narrate its own story, re-member its own saviour and re-embody its own ontology of peace and justice. It follows that this act of self-realization will be a "strange-making act" to the nations. It will "set apart" because it is intelligible only in relation to its own identity.

Yet it is also a double act: simultaneously an act of exclusion and embrace. And in so far as it is this, it can participate in the mysterious process of the healing of the nations. The strategy of our crucified Lord was no strategy at all; it was a radical double openness—to God and to the world. His radical love of God was a radical love of neighbour; his radical love of neighbour was a radical love of God (Luke 10:25–42). So it should not surprise us that the world killed him; nor should it surprise us that God raised him from the dead.

I want to present four tasks of the church which I believe flow from my comments, and which might guide our thoughts/actions on how the church made strange can be for the healing of the nations.

The task of modelling

To live by a different rationale, ontology, ethics, that is, literally to live in a different world, is hard work. To do this well, of course,

Our refusal to advocate violence isn't dependent on having a viable solution to offer to every conceivable difficult situation that might come along, but certainly we have moved very far in the direction of feeling much more strongly that we have things to offer than would have been true in a discussion like this 40 or 50 years ago.

—J. Lawrence Burkholder, Mennonite theologian invited to participate in the April 1997 Peace Committee meetings

requires that we conscientiously develop an alternative life-sustaining tradition with new social structures: structures of economics, health care, managements/labour relations, responses to criminals, international relations, poverty and violent conflict. The model I'm proposing rejects the view that the Christian life consists of an inner disposition living in the same outer world as everyone else. It holds that to be "in Christ" means that we are *"in Winnipeg"* differently than other Winnipegers are. That is, the Christian life is sustained by relating to one another socially in new ways. And this requires the development of alternative social structures.

Christians believe that the ways we are proposing are better able to sustain life than others. And yet our ways must remain open to empirical testing. We could be proven wrong; we could also be proven right.

Mennonites ought to resonate with this approach. In the past we have imagined/embodied alternative structures in education, health care, seniors care, business and dispute settlement. And in many cases our invitation to new models has been well received by a world that could not on its own have imagined them. Yet Christians should never be happy when only our actions are embraced. In the final analysis we are missionaries: Not only do we want our actions copied or tolerated, we want our *Christian mythos* to be embraced. We want all to come to see the God of Jesus Christ as very God. We want to make disciples.

The task of demythologizing

One of our key tasks is to remind the nations around us of their place under God—to rule justly. No nation *qua* nation is Christian. Christian identity cuts across national identity lines. The new humanity in Christ is one which brings people from many nations into one body. People who once were enemies within the same nations can be brought together in Christ (i.e., structures envisioned on the basis of the Christian narrative); people who are estranged because they live in different nations can also be brought into Christian unity.

In the process of being "made strange through Christ" we begin to demythologize the state. This does not mean that we attack the state, or even denounce it, but we unmask its status. We announce to the world that the state also will ultimately be brought before the judgement of Christ. In our current dealings with the state we already hold before it the standards of the rule of the new humanity. We know that it can only embody such a rule imperfectly, just as we know that even the church can only so embody God's reign. Nevertheless, in constantly re-presenting, re-imagining and re-announcing the new *mythos* in Christ we hold before the powers of the world the conviction and the demonstration that God wills, despite its current obstacles, to rule the world by the rule of Christ.

In the final analysis Christians cannot shed their subversive character without losing identity as Christians. Hence, I believe that it is dangerous for Christians to have a definitive theology (theory) of government. By this I mean that it is dangerous to give secular governments too much prominence in the divine economy since God's preferred agency is the new community called church. This is not to relegate secular structures to a realm outside of God's jurisdiction; it is rather to give them their proper place.

The task of ad hoc partnering

There are many ways in which the church partners with governments, especially within democratic nations. But the nature of this partnership, on the basis of the model of "signing as moral agency," must always at best be an *ad hoc partnering.* Why? Because the church's agenda of necessity is one that moves beyond the government's agenda. So while the work of the church and the government intersect, they can never coincide.

The church's role in partnering should serve the role of "stretching the imagination" of the state. That is, our task is to show that there are practical alternatives available which a state's imagination, grounded in preoccupation with security and military power politics, will be unable to see. So the question for Christians is never *whether to partner;* it is rather *how to do so.* And here the guiding concern is the matter of *what we are doing* when we partner.

If we are unable to stretch the state's imagination, then we must ask ourselves what distinguishes our action as a Christian action. And for Christians there must always be the possibility of total objection and non-cooperation, i.e., of doing nothing conscientiously and loudly. Our fundamental partner is God, not the state.

So can we partner/cooperate with government forces in international peacekeeping efforts? If we can do so as Christians, yes; if not, then no. The issue is not whom we work with, it is what we say (sign) when we do.

The task of repentance and re-reading our own stories

As Mennonites, we are still uncomfortable and somewhat awkward in the corridors and the battle grounds of power. And perhaps this is as it should be. Comfort, however, is not the issue; presence is. As J. Lawrence Burkholder reminds us, both sin and complexity play havoc with our discernment on how best to follow Jesus, regardless of where we are. In the final analysis we must remind ourselves that if "thine is the power" can make sense of the resurrection, then it can also make sense of the end of apartheid in South Africa, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. As Christians we should therefore see these events as invitations to the resolution to today's Zaires, Albanias and West Banks.

And yet our hope in their resolution lies not with the current military powers but with the power of God. We may well be signing God's redeeming power imperfectly—and for that we can repent and move on—but we cannot stop speaking of God's redeeming activities among us. Our challenge is to "see" this happening.

Christians are called to re-embody, re-member, re-articulate, re-create, re-present, re-enact the very being of Christ (I Corinthians 10:14–22). This is the call in exile as well as in the promised land. The welfare of the city is as much the concern of the church as it is of the state. But the strategies and methods emanate from different imaginations: different rationalities, different ethics and different ontologies. When we are in Christ, we are called into a whole new world (II Corinthians 2:17). This is not a call out of this space/time sociality; it is a call to be there with a redeeming and hence strange-making posture.

> Among the committed ones, wisdom is spoken, yet it is not a wisdom of this age, or of the rulers of this age, which are being brought to nothing. But in God we speak a wisdom in mystery, which hitherto was hidden, but which is nevertheless foreordained by God before the ages for our glory. I Corinthians 2:6–7 (translation mine)

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Resources

Janzen, Waldemar and Harry Huebner. "Our Role in God's Rule: Lutheran and Mennonite Views on Moral Agency." *Consensus: A Canadian Lutheran Journal of Theology,* 1996.

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Proposed Guidelines for Working With Coalitions

by Peter Dula

I recall here that against teleology and deontology, H. Richard Niebuhr insisted that the first question of ethics was, "What is going on?" It should also be the first question of the MCCer.

It is a question best answered in conversation, and that conversation will be more fruitful if it includes a wide variety of opinions—not because we are unsure of our position but because we are sure our position could be strengthened if it were aware of the variety of perspectives.

As I understand it MCC has been involved in conversation with radically different positions. I think the paradigm case for conversations with and cooperation with others is our work with refugees, whether in Central America or in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

It could hardly be argued that MCC should not be in refugee camps, but the tragic nature of our involvement must be recognized. To put it simply and starkly, our compassion and concern for Rwandan and Burundian Hutus led us to feed and shelter the militias. There's a paradox here: When we are most true to what we want to be, when we go to the places where the pain seems greatest and seek to share in that pain, that's when we end up in ambiguous places like refugee camps.

We will not find unambiguous opportunities to help and we must resist looking for them. Unambiguous situations are only found in cheap novels. We would do better to follow Shakespeare, Conrad and Faulkner, for whom the good guys are always the bad guys.

The reason we fear such a world is that we value our principles and do not wish to compromise them. J. Lawrence Burkholder has expended a great deal of energy arguing that the world is one of compromise, but he hates the word and wishes he did not have to use it.

I would like to suggest another way of looking at it: Instead of saying the world forces us to compromise, why don't we say the world calls upon us to show humility? It will not hurt us to maintain a sense of humility and even irony towards our most cherished convictions, not because we might be wrong but because we can't be right in all the right places.

The classic example here is Huck Finn, who is convinced he is doing the devil's work by aiding the runaway slave Jim's escape. But he refuses to turn Jim in, saying, "All right, I'll go to hell then." If we cannot maintain that sense of humility in personal relationships, we will get along with only a narrowly circumscribed group of people and will be able to understand the world only in an obtuse manner.

The history of peace churches is one of gradual erosion and dilution until they are indistinguishable from the culture around them. The change and revision that conversation entails is not guaranteed to be healthy. It may result in what Keith Graber Miller

> **There are all kinds of ambiguity—natural ambiguity and the ambiguity of numbers. The Good Samaritan would have been in an ambiguous situation if there had been five people nearly killed and yet only three donkeys. Life is one preferential choice after another. And to prefer the wellbeing of this person over the wellbeing of that person is an ambiguous situation.**
>
> **—J. Lawrence Burkholder**

identifies as "isomorphism," the gradual assumption of the conversation partner's characteristics.

Whether our conversation is isomorphic is less dependent upon any guidelines we can formulate here than on the disposition and character of the individual MCCer. And that pressure for isomorphism does not come from interacting with U.N. peacekeeping forces, where the differences are clear enough that we are aware of them. There is more danger of isomorphism in conversation with other progressive groups.

I am proposing four guidelines for avoiding isomorphism:

1. There is a burden on the MCC personnel office to pick volunteers who are sure of themselves and what they, and we, believe. For example, we need volunteers who value the kingdom more than the revolution, and I would like to see MCC place volunteers who are sure of themselves, but not terribly sure of themselves. Part of my concern here is for the church and a body of volunteers that is willing to have its imagination stretched. I am persuaded by Harry Huebner's paper (see pp. 11–13) that we have a role in stretching others' imaginations, but I am also interested in having our imaginations stretched.

2. We will work only with those who allow us to maintain our integrity. We will look for coalitions that are tossed salads, not melting pots. We will look for coalitions that allow for various means toward ends we share and not those who want to force us into one way of doing it.

3. We will work with those who are helping to create a space for healing and reconciliation. This is especially important for considering our relationship to peacekeeping forces. I have in mind Mark Jantzen's presentation at our last meeting (see pp. 6–7). In Belgrade, the peacekeeping forces created a climate of trust. Mark suggested that their presence seemed more like a police presence than a military one. I will not pretend to have answers for all the questions. I simply want to underline the fact that that is a very different situation than if there had been U.S. troops in Nicaragua ten years ago, for example.

4. We realize that such decisions can only be made on a case-by-case basis. And that's another reason it depends on the disposition of the individual MCCer. I want to quote from John Howard Yoder's 1988 presidential address to the Society of Christian Ethics, which is titled, "To Serve Our God and Rule the World." Yoder says,

> To "rule the world" in fellowship with the living Lamb will sometimes mean humbly building a grassroots culture, with Jeremiah. Sometimes (as with Joseph and Daniel) it will mean helping the pagan king solve one problem at a time. Sometimes (again as with Daniel and his friends) it will mean disobeying the king's imperative of idolatry, refusing to be bamboozled by the claims made for the emperor's new robe or his fiery furnace.

To sort out whether we follow the lead of Jeremiah, Joseph or Daniel, we will need to be discerning and imaginative.

Principles for Relating to Peacekeepers

The MCC Peace Committee met in Akron, Pa. on April 11 and 12, 1997 for the second in a series of discussions on how we respond to military peacekeeping interventions. The meeting followed the October 1996 meeting in which we heard from several persons who had worked in areas where peacekeeping troops were present or were being considered. Following that more experientially-focused discussion, the April meeting considered theological and ethical reflection on peacekeeping intervention.

The issue of peacekeeping intervention has been a recurring agenda item for MCC during the past five years. Although the point was made that many of the issues are not unique to this era, there is newness in the situation, the actors, and the makeup of the Mennonite churches. Partially, this is because of political changes in the world system. One question before us was the extent to which we also as a church have changed in our place in the world and our categories for thinking. We acknowledged that issues such as this are at the "edges" of our thought and identity, rather than at the center of what we should be doing as Christians in the world. These edge issues demand our attention and can overwhelm our sense of central calling to work positively for peace.

Ted Koontz summarized the discussion we have had in recent years on this topic, both in the Mennonite press and within MCC. Harry Huebner focused on the central, eschatological nature of a Christian peace witness. The church exists in the world as a sign of an alternate reality, and this means that we will relate to governments and other structures from that basis. Peter Dula and Lawrence Burkholder focused on the nature of our witness in the context of working with people who share our concerns but who have a different motivation or confession.

The following summary comments are intended to review the central ideas touched on in both the presentations and the discussion. They reflect the thinking of the Peace Committee, and are presented for the consideration of others working within MCC. We recognize that decisions on how to respond are made in conversations which include partners and workers who are facing actual situations. We work continually to keep our theological language close to and reflective of our actual experience.

The Language We Use

We noted that Mennonite churches have changed a great deal in recent decades in the vocabulary we use to address topics of peace: from saying to government that we have "nothing to say about how it runs its war but only about how we should be excused from participation in it," to activist participation in advocacy; from describing ourselves as nonresistant or pacifist, to talking about peacemaking and conflict transformation. This change in language reflects the changing nature of our identity and relationships in the wider world.

Silence and Action

We will not call for humanitarian military intervention. We appreciate that there may be tragic situations where we have no alternative course of action to suggest. This could be either because our understanding is incomplete or because we cannot see a possible nonviolent solution. In situations like these, we may choose to publicly neither oppose nor support an international intervention. We would remain silent, not to disengage or avoid action or to legitimate violence, but in recognition of the tragic and ambiguous nature of the situation.

Governments, however, seldom have the same option for silence or choosing whether to act or not. They are required to act. Part of our responsibility at such times is to stretch the imaginations of both those who must act and those who can choose whether to act or not. In this light, we will frequently comment on humanitarian military interventions that governments or international bodies decide to take. We acknowledge that such interventions can, in some situations, save lives.

Underlying Theological Issues

We experience tension between two ways, present both in the Bible and in our tradition, of talking about the relationship between God and the world's governing structures. Romans 13 suggests that governments have the purpose of restraining evil, including the use of armed force, while Christians, as part of the redeemed community, are not to participate in the use of such force. This implies a different ethic for the church than for governing authorities. In some tension with this is an understanding that sees the Lordship of Christ over both church and world as suggesting that God has one standard for both Christians and governing authorities. We have some differences among us in the weight we assign to these two emphases, but suggest that future Peace Office commentaries take seriously the concerns raised by both of them.

Police or Military

Is there a fundamental difference between the function of police and the function of a military force? If so, is this helpful for our discussion? Our practice as pacifists includes reliance on police services in our home communities. We are troubled by what looks like hypocrisy when we rely on such maintenance of order, but critique actions designed to bring order in other, more chaotic situations.

MCC workers and partners frequently find themselves in places where order has broken down. Is action on the part of an international force closer to police work or military work in such a setting? When structures that usually surround the work of police, such as courts and civilian review, are not in place, can an intervention force perform a police function? Would it be helpful to have clearer criteria for understanding the difference between police and military forces?

People, if they seek for nonviolent solutions, eventually will find them. I want to refer to Jeremiah 31:31. "All of them, high and low alike, shall know me, says the Lord." I feel that that has to do with the indwelling God and that somehow there has to be a wisdom that flows from within. In the end when the time comes, if we really believe in the indwelling presence of God, we will know what to do. I think in a way Gandhi was an example that the student who really seeks after a pacifist solution to the problems will be empowered by God to find a way to show it and not feel helpless and hopeless.

—Margaretha Ediger (MCC Peace Committee member)

The Committee did not reach consensus on this issue, and recognizes that it is a real question faced by MCC workers.

Pacifist Identity

We agreed that Christian pacifism, based on following Christ, is a central eschatological commitment shaped by membership in the faith community. If we rely on practical solutions in a tragic world, without this eschatological commitment to following Christ, pacifism will erode. A clear sense of our identity in Christ precedes ethical discernment on all things, but especially complex issues like peace in society. There is a need for humility in striving to be faithful. We will be challenged and stretched by our involvements with the hurts of the world.

Guidelines for MCC

- "Ad hoc partnering": We can partner with a wide range of groups, including governments.

(continued on page 16)

We need to keep such determinations "ad hoc" or "case by case" without making commitments beyond functional activities, and on the basis of careful discernment.

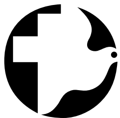
- Primary partners will continue to consist of faith communities, civil society groups and international nongovernmental organizations. Focusing primarily on these, rather than state structures, is not only a traditional bias but a choice centered on an understanding of where societal change happens most effectively.
- We will maintain a clear sense of identity as pacifist Christians when we join others in coalition. Our goal should be to join those activities where our positions remain intact and do not become diluted or rendered invisible.
- We should recognize that governments organize positive security. Especially in this era of "government-bashing" we may need to focus more on this positive understanding of our participation in society. Organized human society (government) provides many securities that are good, that are needed and that we can support (such as social support systems). Supporting effective security programs is as important as our critique of those we question.
- MCC needs to place people who are well grounded in the Christian faith tradition, who value the Reign of God above all and who are willing to have their imaginations stretched.

We acknowledge our own sinfulness and limitations and desire to maintain a humble posture, but do not want to let this inhibit or restrict engagement in places where Christian compassion is needed.

This is a summary of the discussion at the April 1997 MCC Peace Committee meeting prepared by Bob Herr and Judy Zimmerman Herr.

To simply say "In this case it is absolutely good" and "In that case it is absolutely bad" is something that I am a little bit nervous about. I want events interpreted from the standpoint of what it means to be under the rule of Christ. That's in a sense my bottom line. So marginal events are important in how they are seen—by us and by other people. Can they stretch the imaginations of the people around us, or are they going to be seen in exactly the same way as events that are interpreted as arising out of an imagination that is not rooted in Christ?

—Harry Huebner



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