

Paul Graham

## 1 INTRODUCTION

A slave ship sets to sea. Above the decks, the small crew live comfortably, eat, rest, go about their work. Below the decks, in serried ranks lies the human cargo, bodies packed together, hardly able to move.

While at sea, the captain of the ship has a change of heart. Perhaps it was his own conscience, perhaps the steadily rising and threatening discontent from below decks, perhaps a message that the world no longer tolerated slavery. Whatever the case, the slaves leave their prison and emerge above deck.

Suddenly there is a crisis. The ship is no longer functional. Without substantial changes, it cannot accommodate all those on board. Suddenly the provisions made for a few must be available for many. The ship must be refitted, decks uprooted, redesigned, rebuilt - with only the existing slave crew and those they have held captive, and while on the high seas.

No analogy can be pushed too far - but South Africans are involved in such a sea change, and are facing many of the problems of trying to establish a new society while continuing to live in the old, and with all the fears of running aground or tearing apart in the midst of the transition.

The concern of all South Africans is that violence (whether organized or spontaneous) will render all our planning for the future irrelevant. Creating a long term commitment to peace may require occasionally to continue with programmes despite the violence - a difficult choice for any new government. But to stop everything may turn out to only exacerbate the problem. So while this article will describe a number of possible programmes, the difficulty of implementing them should not be underestimated - nor should one underestimate the cynicism with which some might be approached in the face of the experience of those communities which confront daily the terrible violence.

The article will describe some of the strategies which we and other organizations and associations are

engaging in to create peace and democracy in South Africa. The lessons we are learning may have general applicability - or they may merely tell of the potential for creativity and commitment which can be released within a particular country struggling against violence and oppression in specific conditions. It is certainly likely that they will form the basis for policies which we will adopt under the next stage of the transition to democracy.

## 2 WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT MAKE FOR PEACE?

A bumper sticker appeared some years ago produced by the Black Sash, a national organization of women advocating human rights and providing human rights advice centres. It said: 'Peace is a group effort'. The National Peace Accord (NPA) signed in September 1991 by a number of political parties and brokered by certain business and church leaders - and to which we will return - produced a substantive preamble linking questions of peace to democracy, development and personal and corporate responsibility. In general, South Africans have linked the achievement of peace with the establishment of justice, the removal of apartheid and the institution of democracy: a task which requires active engagement by individuals and organizations.

## 3 DEVELOPMENT, PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

Instituting peace-keeping activities in conditions of widespread violence, does not ensure the attainment of peace. The conditions which lead to violence have to be addressed substantively. The National Peace Accord identified five areas:

- the conduct of political parties and organizations (and their followers and loyalists) towards one another and the general public;
- the conduct of the security forces, both covert and overt;
- the capacity of the judicial system to administer justice fairly, openly and promptly;

- the capacity of a divided society to resolve differences and conflicts in a non-violent and collaborative way;
- reversing the socio-economic stagnation and deprivation into which the country had been driven during the apartheid years.

In an overarching preamble it was established as a matter of agreement that the lack of a democratic culture and political structure at national and local levels was a fundamental obstacle to the resolution of violence.

One could add a number of other legacies of the apartheid era to this list: the widespread availability of weapons; the collapse of, or over-extended nature of, local government services; the shortage of skilled mediators and conciliators; poor communication services between and within the security services and political organizations; and a constitutional crisis resulting in uncertainty over policy and structure at all levels of government.

Three themes pervade the various initiatives to establish peace: the attempts to create legitimacy, stability and socio-economic development. Without legitimacy there can be no system of stability and no delivery of development. Without delivery there can be no stability and therefore an undermining of attempts at legitimacy. Without stability there will be a volatile cocktail within which delivery and legitimacy founder. For South Africans at least, the debate about the relationship between democracy and development seems obvious. Both, please and as soon as possible.

#### **4 WANTING PEACE AND CREATING PEACE**

Soon after the Peace Accord was signed, parties used that symbol of commitment to ending violence (both at a community and state level) to enter into formal national negotiations about the issues of political legitimacy. The events of the last two years have shown that it is one thing to want peace - as the majority of South Africans do - and another to create peace. As I write, we have just concluded a national day of peace in which, in an echo of the rituals following the 1914-18 war, the country stood still for five minutes at noon. It was by all accounts an extremely widespread and well-supported event.

In the weeks that have passed since that day, the violence has continued without let-up.

So there has to be some humility amongst those wanting peace. The struggle is costly and long-term in nature.

#### **5 ACTION TO REDUCE VIOLENCE**

There are a number of activities which have as their primary purpose the reduction of violence. They are predicated on the twin concerns of compassion for victims and commitment to a less volatile context for negotiating democracy and development.

Amongst these activities, the monitoring of political activities and organizations and of the security forces have become a regular part of South African life. The South African Police consider themselves one of the most monitored of all police forces - with both international and local observer groups, the political parties and organizations themselves, a statutory judicial commission (the 'Goldstone' Commission) and a number of general human rights documentation groups engaged in watching policing activities. In the South African context monitoring describes a range of activities from non-interventionist observation through to conciliation and occasionally 'on the street' mediation and advocacy.

Monitors are put into the field by Peace Accord structures as well as independent non-governmental organizations. While there is some indication of support for a formal monitoring agency to be established on a long term basis, it is the ad-hoc and voluntary nature of monitoring which often gives it the greatest effect.

At a problem-solving level - both preventative, where there is some evidence of success; and post violence adjudication, where there is less - the National Peace Accord (NPA) has established regional dispute resolution committees (RDRCs) which consist of delegates from the various signatory bodies and an independent chair. In certain areas, these have become substantial organizations - as opposed to committees - in their own right and act as an umbrella under which there can be joint decision-making (and occasionally joint control) about the deployment of national security forces.

These RDRCs have as one of their tasks the setting up of local peace committees. These local committees

provide citizens in very ordinary circumstances with a unique opportunity for building bridges across previously deep divides. Black and White, resistance and 'White' politics, security forces and citizens, statutory and voluntary bodies. The committees meet regularly and act as community sounding boards, early warning posts, and problem solving groups. While there is still evidence of patronizing behaviour and of the security forces using the committees for public relations gestures, these groups are creating the climate within which better long term relations can be built even if they are powerless to end the immediate violence which is, in most instances, beyond their control.

There is still uncertainty about the extent to which these committees will become institutionalized following the establishment of an interim government. Some might become voluntary committees, others might move towards NGO status, and still others be subsumed into local government public policy programmes or community/police liaison committees.

Perhaps the final programme which should be mentioned within the framework of violence reduction activities is the Commission of Inquiry regarding the Prevention of Violence and Intimidation (otherwise known as the 'Goldstone' Commission after the judge appointed to lead the commission). This standing commission conducts inquiries at its own behest and that of others into various aspects of violence. It has its own investigative officers and calls for witnesses, expert testimony and public submissions. It has now established a substantial database on violence and makes its reports to the signatories to the NPA and to the State President. By exposing aspects of the violence to adversarial controversy and public debate, it has provided an outlet for some of the tensions in a society under stress. It also adds considerably to our understanding of the causes of the violence. It may also have changed public perception and judicial perceptions of the role of the judiciary and enabled other judicial processes a more active participation in building peace. The process of the commission has thus been a more powerful violence reduction programme than reports and recommendations which it has produced.

## **6 TRANSFORMING THE POLICE FORCE**

There is no substitute to the existing police force. Whatever its history, para-military ethos, and compromised mission, it will not be possible to replace it.

So there must be a transformation of its mission, staff, training, and operational approach. The South African Police (SAP) has been, for many obvious reasons, a very closed system and as recently as 1991 independent research on the future role of the police was a touchy (if no longer treasonable) matter. But this research, both academic and policy based, has culminated in a number of linked actions. The Police Board, comprising senior generals and citizens, was established under the terms of the NPA. After a bumpy beginning, it is now beginning to be involved in discussions about strategic direction for the police force. Many of the non-police representatives on this Board were involved in the steadily growing research programmes which, post 1990, were more concerned with the reconstruction and 'rehabilitation' of the police force than documenting its human rights record.

A study-tour overseas by a group of SAP and community mid-level leaders acted as a confidence builder for police participation in a conference of those civil society groups, both political and independent, whom the police had always seen as mortal enemies. A common enterprise of building community-police relations from both sides was established and this has been continued with national and future regional workshops.

Unfortunately, the police's inability to assist in reducing the violence is attributed to a combination of incompetence and unwillingness. So while there continues to be a general commitment to a different model of policing, it is regularly subverted by hardening attitudes on all sides in the wake of particular incidents of violence. It is this distrust which has now led to the agreement to establish - despite all logistical constraints - a multi-party peace-keeping force.

As it is likely that there will be a need for a professional unit to deal with policing of mass action and community conflict, this peace-keeping force could become the fore-runner to such a unit. There are alternative ways of ensuring effective and just policing of mass action and community conflict by using a specialized national community conflict mediation unit linked to the Department of Justice which mobilizes local leadership and informs the conduct of police on the ground.

The most recent initiatives are in the area of training. This has always been an internal function for the police, but now training is being offered at an English

speaking University and the distance learning curriculum of the police is under discussion by representatives of community and academic organizations outside the police. In addition to these in-service initiatives, there will have to be a review of basic training.

Apart from the peace-keeping force concept, there seems to be a strong argument for establishing now a recruitment drive for the police force and the use of a facility (perhaps an existing under-utilized army base) to provide a proper basic training for a new set of police recruits. This group would only be available for deployment after the scheduled election and could be the first group of 'post-apartheid' police officers. Obviously the training would have to be planned and monitored by the Transitional Executive Council sub-council, but this could be a concrete project which has long term implications. And it need not wait.

## **7 DEVELOPING THE CAPACITY FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION**

There have been a number of attempts to use socio-economic reconstruction programmes either to establish the conditions for peace or to reward those areas which create a peaceful environment. There is some suspicion - worsened by the employment of consultants who seem to have learned their trade in the National Security Management System - that the NPA approach to development is indeed what used to be known as 'oil spot' reform: the attempt to establish development in small areas in the hope that those would then be more peaceful. But clearly, producing a water point where there is a fight over water, or a taxi rank where there is a dispute over commuters - while possibly helping in the short term - cannot replace a more thorough going macro development process. Moreover, in the absence of such policies, these well meaning individual initiatives may only become the source for more conflict and violence.

At the other end of the scale, those places which have established peace processes have tried to use the delivery of, for example, reconstruction of housing, building of community facilities, and job creation programmes to consolidate the peace. However, there is normally such a lag between intention and delivery that few such ventures have worked. While this may have long term benefits, it does not achieve the short term goal of consolidating treaties and local peace commitments.

Programmes which combat poverty require a range of community organizations and capacities within communities. Assisting people to organize themselves through advice centres, small NGO's (sometimes linked to churches), leadership development and then enabling them to gain access to resources may become easier with a new constitution and government. The need for such programmes especially in marginalized communities will remain urgent.

## **8 CREATING RESPONSIBLE CITIZENS AND A RESPONSIVE CIVIL SERVICE**

The resistance movement in South Africa was built on three pillars: international solidarity, the armed struggle, and mass mobilization. In the trade union movement and in the community based organizations - which culminated in the United Democratic Front - individual participation in organized action was established as an important component in achieving democracy. Within this action, internal democracy was seen as an important component of the struggle - one struggled for democracy democratically. Thus there has been a strong culture of public participation by informed citizens in opposition to the State.

It is now essential to maintain and strengthen this civic culture while at the same time rethinking the relationship of this culture towards the State. This is no easy matter. As the State takes on a benevolent role, citizens may be encouraged to believe that they no longer need to participate actively in shaping their own destinies. Others, who have grown up with a malevolent State continue to treat its interventions with suspicion and distrust. Neither of these provide the balance between democratic participation and effective government which will be necessary in the future.

There is clearly a need for a broadly educational programme to assist in the creation of a responsible citizenry and a responsive civil service. In addition to a variety of educational events, ranging from formal tertiary programmes for existing and potential civil servants down to informal weekend and one day events for ordinary citizens, wider ranging initiatives are required. 'Internal education programmes' are thus needed across a range of institutions. At present, with the exception of the trade unions and a few progressive firms such programmes are absent. These activities do not happen

spontaneously - they require a full-time co-ordinator.

As far as public education is concerned, there are some specific programmes which seem to have relevance for the future. Radio - which will be subject to the Independent Broadcasting Authority and will certainly be the subject of de-regulation - is a major tool in education for democracy and peace. Research conducted on the use of radio for public health education suggests that it makes a greater impact when used as part of an integrated programme with supporting literature and learning groups. This is one area within which collaboration between NGOs which have general credibility and enthusiasm and the State might be considered. Or the State might provide an enabling environment through legislation, taxation procedures, and open access to state institutions such as schools and clinics so that such radio-based education can be in the hands of civil society. The experiments which are presently underway in relation to voter education for the election may provide some pointers to the best mechanisms for the use of this medium.

A second area within which public education must be conducted is within the schooling system. There are already various experiments with civic education, people's education, peace education, 'street law' (which includes a human rights education component) and even ecological education (which includes a gentle political education/systems analysis interpretation). All of these are designed for scholars and are intended either as enrichment programmes or as curriculum innovations - where they jostle with similar science and technology curriculum innovations. However, there are other interventions which focus on the school as a learning environment and attempt to create a culture of learning and democracy through changes in teachers and principals attitudes and behaviours, in decision-making processes involving the various school stakeholders, and in relations between schools and educational departments.

With the massive backlog in formal education, a second related intervention must be considered - and that is the use of non-formal methods to achieve the aims of formal education. Programmes of adult education and those aimed at the marginalized youth, youth service schemes, peace corps, and public works programmes also provide avenues for peace and democracy education on a massive scale. Indeed some of the programme mentioned above are being

informed in the first place by such goals and are seen as achieving other educational outcomes almost as a by product. A great deal more thought will have to go into these programmes. Moreover, as they are presently being driven by the non-governmental sector, there are significant financial, skill and time constraints.

## **9 CREATING A VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY**

A vibrant pluralist civil society provides a capacity within which conflicts can be resolved skilfully, decisions made rationally, and violence diminished. There are presently a number of initiatives to ensure that there is 'an enabling environment' within which such a civil society can flourish. A range of NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), voluntary associations, political parties outside of government, single issue groups, and so on already exist in South Africa. To these can be added another tier of what one might refer to as the 'informal sector' of organized civil society - as they seem to occupy the same position within the elite consciousness as the 'informal sector' within the business sector. These are the burial and savings clubs, the African Independent Churches, township and shack village sports and recreational clubs, market garden and other women's co-ops, child minding schemes and so on. In many cases these are women's organizations or based in shack or hostel areas - which explains their marginalization. In addition, there are the more traditional community structures which are established around corporate cultural identities and traditional leadership.

To enhance and defend a civil society within South Africa will take programmes which recognize this variety. The country has waged a war in which co-option of these various bodies played an important part - untying real institutions from the objectives to which they were put either to support apartheid or to resist it will be a slow process. Indeed, there is evidence, particularly in Natal, that the perceived political linkages of civil society organizations has made it difficult to mobilize these groups for peace. They have deliberately or not, tended to play into the conflicts which erupt into violence.

The rehabilitation of civil society in which a conflict over rubbish removal or the positioning of a drainage system becomes an opportunity for peaceful civic participation by individuals and groups rather than a source of violence lies in the future. Institutions

which create programmes to assist this rehabilitation are in short supply.

## 10 ENDING THE WAR

It has been a signal achievement of government negotiators that South Africans have lost the consciousness of a war being waged against apartheid. Yet the legacy of that war remains. Apart from the casualties of war, it was a dirty affair in which criminals were armed, local communities were subverted and destabilized, and White South Africans in particular were misinformed.

At one level, it is to our benefit that the war psychosis vanished so quickly in favour of a commitment to peace. At another level, it has led to certain matters being overlooked. Amongst these are the need for combatants to receive recognition for their struggle and to have a symbolic ending to the conflict. The experience of the USA with Vietnam suggests that such a catharsis is an essential component in allowing a society to move on.

One important question is the widespread availability of weapons. The police have typically seen this as a criminal problem and have adopted policies (rewards, punishments) which are doomed to failure. They do not take account of social conditions which encourage the owning of weapons, the relationship between weapons and parties which consider the war to be in a stage of cease-fire rather than completion, and the culture of weaponry which has been encouraged during the past years on all sides. Special programmes will have to be adopted such as symbolic laying down of arms, guns for food or jobs, improved policing of areas where citizens feel at risk, educational programmes to reduce self-defence programmes to passive neighbourhood watches, and so on.

On the recent peace day, there was a certain amount of euphoria when hostel residents ventured into the streets and shook hands with township residents. This was seen as a symbol of reconciliation. It may have been, but it may also be as short lived as the Christmas truces on the battlefields of Flanders. Reconciliation between those who have been at war - or who perceive themselves to be at war, even if shots are not being fired - is no simple task. While a 'truth commission' may deal with the past, it cannot deal with the present. Programmes to build relationships between combatants (whether police and township

youth, South African Defence Force (SADF) and resistance armies, Black and White) have never been successful when they focused only on issues of reconciliation. Relationships are healed in joint action. In order to achieve that joint action, there must be joint responsibility for the future. At the moment there are many who do not see themselves as part of a single society - and with the regional fragmentation which seems likely, it may be hard to develop a collaborative (or '*Hlanganani*') attitude. Churches may be able to bring these to the fore again within a more receptive environment.

In addition to the implementation of weapons reduction programmes, the integration of armies and the transformation of a militaristic society will have to be concluded. A white paper on defence policy, generated in public debate involving both military and peace organizations may be a worthwhile endeavour and the present international and domestic climate is favourable for such a debate. The establishment of a peace-keeping force should not be allowed to limit a debate on a general defence policy (or, in line with some recent thinking internationally, a peace policy).

## 11 POLITICAL LEGITIMACY

Lest it be forgotten, the quest for legitimacy will not be over with the first election process. There has always been a tension between legality - which will be created by the elections and the implementation of a constitutional draft - and legitimacy which has to be earned and given. While it is likely that at national level, this will come with elections, there are a number of unknowns which could make it necessary to ensure that all State departments continue to seek legitimacy in their contact with people. The first is the degree to which voters will turn out; the second, their ownership of the new national and regional government structures; the third, their acceptance of the results - particularly in some contested regions; and the fourth, their acceptance of, and knowledge of, the constitution and human rights framework.

Creating legitimacy will require effort. It is likely that a future government will want to consolidate many of the programmes which were started as interim fora - at national, regional and local level. Especially at local level, it cannot be assumed that the elections will deal with the needs of citizens in relation to local government structures. It is likely therefore that the

skills learned in developing legitimacy for development processes and political decision making will have to be used in the first few years of a new government. That government may want to harness such skills - which are presently in the hands of the non-government development sector and an increasing number of skilled individuals.

## **12 STOPPING THE ROCKING BOAT, SHOOTING THE RAPIDS, AND SAILING DOWN THE RIVER**

South Africa has three processes which require interventions to establish peace and democracy. First, some of the policy options are being forged now and will be necessary into the future. Second, hopefully will be stop gaps which will be outmoded as the transition succeeds. And third, all require

concerted effort and sensitive approaches from government - which may be inclined to overplay its role and lose the very resource that it needs, organized civil society.

To return to the opening metaphor in this article, first, we have to stop the boat from rocking. While we are bobbing like an uncontrolled cork, we stand every chance of capsizing before we even continue the journey. Violence reduction activities make sure we have the stability we need to shoot the rapids - a dangerous time but necessary if we are going to get through to a new government under a democratic dispensation. Having shot the rapids, we have to learn to sail down the river together - in itself a feat which all countries find difficult. In some respects at least, the transition to democracy will never be entirely concluded.

---