

# **Reconciliation - A Gift from God and a Source of New Life**

Texts and Materials  
for the Second European Ecumenical Assembly  
in Graz in 1997

A Handout  
by the Reconciliation Project Group  
of the German Commission of Justice and Peace

---

Schriftenreihe Gerechtigkeit und Frieden  
Herausgeber: Deutsche Kommission Justitia et Pax  
Redaktion: Jörg Lür

---

---

**Versöhnung - Gabe Gottes und Quelle neuen Lebens.** Texte und Materialien zur Zweiten Europäischen Ökumenischen Versammlung in Graz 1997. Eine Handreichung der Projektgruppe Versöhnung der Deutschen Kommission Justitia et Pax.

Schriftenreihe Gerechtigkeit und Frieden  
Arbeitspapier 83e

ISBN 3-928214-97-7

1997

---

Auslieferung: Justitia et Pax, Adenauerallee 134, 53113 Bonn  
Telefon 0228 - 103217 Fax: 0228 - 103318

## Table of Contents

Preface .....	2
I. The everyday reality of conflicts .....	3
II. Perpetrators - victims - spectators: On the question of participation in and moral joint responsibility for conflicts. ....	5
III. How is reconciliation made possible? .....	10
IV. A just peace as the aim of reconciliation. ....	15
V. Functions for specific reconciliatory activity in creating a European peace order. ....	17
VI. Reconciliation work as mission and obligation for Christians. ....	21
VII. Recommendations to the European Ecumenical Assembly. ....	23

## **Preface**

In preparation for the German Ecumenical Assembly, which was held in Erfurt in 1996, the German Justitia et Pax Commission formed a Project Group on Reconciliation. Back in the autumn of 1995, the group adopted a working paper entitled "Reconciliation - more than a word?". It was handed to the Preparatory Committee of the Working Group of Christian Churches.

On the basis of the discussions which have been held in various bodies, this text has been revised, added to and forwarded by the German Justitia et Pax Commission to the Council of European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE), and to the Conference of European Churches (CEC) in preparation for the Second European Ecumenical Assembly in Graz in 1997.

Bonn / Dresden, March 1997

Dieter Grande

Head of the Project Group on Reconciliation  
of the German Justitia et Pax Commission

## I. The everyday reality of conflicts

It only makes sense to talk of reconciliation if there is an awareness that conflicts which have not been overcome change people's feelings, thought and acts in a fundamental way. Ultimately, this process of change can also not be circumvented by those who do not wish to admit to themselves, or to others, the fact of such a conflict not having been overcome, or who seek to suppress or minimise it. Under the surface of a mentality which holds that suffering from such conflicts is a matter only for those who have excessive difficulty coping with the realities of existence, the lack of reconciliation with the conflict situation is able to do its destructive worst, unhindered even by those barriers, fragile as they are, which can be maintained by keeping painful memories alive.

There is a sense in which the existence of everyday conflicts has proven itself to be inevitable. Even in situations where people long to avoid conflicts, and to resolve those which do arise by successful forms of co-existence, they may experience conflicts as the structural momentum of their social situation which they are not able to change. "Objective" conflicts of interest, which are not infrequently imposed by differing links to socially or institutionally defined functional role assignments, provide an example of what is meant here: they can limit the potential for co-operation, even where those concerned agree on their desire to prevent such interests conflicting.

Such conflicts can at least be alleviated up to a certain point by the fact that they are essentially negotiable. Their detrimental effect on the nature of the personal relationship between those involved in the conflict can also be limited by the fact that they are able to distinguish the objective side of the various conflicting interests from the subjective side, i.e. the assessment of the character and motivations of the respective opponent. Even where a conflict cannot be resolved satisfactorily, opponents do not have to become enemies as a result, and differences do not have to give rise to lasting anger, or even hate.

Not all conflict situations which occur in reality, perhaps not even the majority of them, ever correspond to this basic type of conflicts of interest which may be regarded objectively, with the associated potential for dealing with them rationally and maintaining peaceful relations and attitudes on the part of the individuals concerned. One thing, experience shows that it is relatively seldom possible to intentionally and emotionally separate with care the differences related to the issue giving rise to the

conflict from a possible aversion to the person asserting the different position. For another, not every conflict is based on negotiable conflicts of interest. It is especially those conflicts which prove themselves to be personally and socially particularly destructive which are not infrequently rooted in circumstances dating further back than the specific cause of the conflict at hand. If a common history of conflicts is reflected here which has already lasted for some time, and which goes hand in hand with more deep-seated resentment, because those concerned have experienced this history differently, the proportion of what can be solved by negotiation is considerably reduced in favour of those elements and characteristics of the conflict situation in which non-negotiable questions of personal morals, as well as those of social and political ethos, are equally concerned.

Reconciliation is particularly needed in situations where such conflicts with moral connotations largely define circumstances which leave suffering uncomforted, or which perhaps continually re-awaken and deepen it. The comments below will be concerned with such situations. The recognition that reconciliation and forgiveness are necessary for life and survival as the only alternative to conflicts which are otherwise insurmountable, unholy and destructive is certainly one which is reached not only through a Christian perspective and conviction, but which is open to all "men and women of good will". There are many of them, world-wide, as well as in Europe; within the established Churches, and everywhere where people have remained sensitive to suffering, and shakeable, and do not accept a logic of thought and action which selects people and their situations without mercy in terms of victors and vanquished, winners and losers.

## **II. Perpetrators - victims - spectators: On the question of participation in and moral joint responsibility for conflicts**

Conflicts do not have only an "objective" side, which makes it possible to describe and categorise them in different ways. If one seeks ways to deal with them sensibly, it becomes indispensable to take a look at the subjective side of the events associated with the conflict. The way in which the conflict is perceived by those concerned on each side, who often find themselves portrayed there in differing roles, and are each affected in a different way.

### *The moral profundity of conflicts*

What can be established in general in reference to conflict situations particularly applies to those where ethical questions are concerned and moral assessments become unavoidable. When a conflictual state of mind already arises out of a personal relationship between two individuals in that one of them considers himself or herself to be the victim of an evidently unjust, and possibly also unlawful, action on the part of the other, this perception is imprinted on the person's inner stance towards the situation differently, and more deeply, than in a situation where the conflict is restricted to negotiable opposing interests. However, for those actors who assume the role of perpetrators or observers, the conflict becomes all the more threatening the more fundamental moral standards are affected by it.

Added to this is the fact that the different roles assumed by those involved in the conflict are not a static, unchangeable value. Especially in the course of long-term conflicts, it can, rather, be repeatedly observed that the roles of the individual actors can change. Victims can also become perpetrators, and perpetrators victims. Observers who at first sight are not involved may gain joint responsibility for the course of the conflict by permitting opportunities to intervene - to act as a go-between for the parties, or to protect the side which is at risk of sliding into the victim role - pass by unheeded. A large proportion of the conflicts which is frequently typical of the efforts to solve a socio-economic conflict between two parties which have been enemies for a long time, is caused by the fact that one party is in a position to act, while the other is in the wait-and-see position. A phase of constructive work on a conflict can be achieved until one races up to this lack of clarity and refrains from ill-advisedly taking sides with regard to the matter of who is to bear the responsibility for the suffering caused by the conflict - or even

transfers it to actors who are hardly able to effectively defend themselves against the consequences of such an assignment, as in the "scapegoat" mechanism.

### *Individual responsibility and involvement in unjust circumstances*

If one inquires after responsibility, even guilt, for serious suffering imposed on the victims of a conflict, one should consider that the actions of the perpetrators are frequently carried out under circumstances which make it difficult, or even impossible, to be sensitive to the suffering of others. The major psycho-social mechanisms of insidious acclimatisation to systematically-caused wrong, the imitation effects associated with this, and not least the ideological justification of even the most serious violations of human rights and their reflection in individual consciousness, can largely be reconstructed in the light of the history and phenomenology of all modern dictatorships.

Existential experiences of being uprooted (for instance by war, expulsion, fundamental changes in the social and political situation) can easily make one's thought patterns dangerously and excessively ideological. Such experiences are answered not only individually, but are processed to form complex social discourses on ideal interpretations, be they of a national, ethnic, cultural or religious nature. These interpretations are closely linked to the individual's identity. Especially in conflict situations, they frequently develop a strong power to form groups, and this power has a normative character in political life. The collective interpretation of individual experiences shows a horizon which refers to the fact of being able to overcome suffering which has been undergone. It makes it possible not to become overwhelmed in the face of events which appear to be all-powerful, but to regain some ability to fight against the situation.

The danger lying in such processes of interpretation is that it is possible to close oneself off, more or less autistically, to the comparable experiences and suffering of other individuals and groups, the reality of which has no role to play in the interpretation of such collective identities. This in turn gives rise to a strong resistance to critical enquiries regarding the activities of one's own group. Everyone here tends to interpret these enquiries as attacks on one's personal identity, and to respond accordingly. The situation of the competing interpretations, fundamentally conflict-related and made all the more profound by this process. Its political consequences may lie in the fact of having become entangled in (new) guilt.

That which can be stated on principle under more "human rights-friendly" circumstances, which are less violent, is particularly applicable here: the political, economic and social structures and institutions in which people find themselves frequently reflect the consequences of guilt-ridden, even sinful, acts. Such structures can make it almost impossible to bring to fruition the intention to act positively because the actors are already embroiled in the guilt which has been defined for them. Not lastly, reconciliation processes can be hindered by this, and their lasting and profound effect lessened. If reconciliation is to be successful, what is therefore needed, in addition to a personal changing of ways, is for these structures and institutions to be broken and changed in order that injustice may be overcome and more justice brought about.

Where in such situations one speaks of the phenomenon of "social sin", which spreads in suitable structures and institutions, and then exerts its influence on the individual consciousness<sup>1</sup>, the possibility is used of availing oneself of analogous definitions in expressing oneself. This definition lends expression to the fact that relationships between individuals, but as well as, and in particular, within a society, and between peoples and states, may be damaged in a way which entails guilt, going beyond the definable lack of justice.

The urgency of overcoming injustice at the level of political structures and institutions, as well as those which are the result of deformed perceptions of reality on the part of large groups, is also evident on the basis of the fact that it is only possible in rare exceptional cases to subsequently compensate for individual detriments caused by such means, through to damage to life and limb. German experience with dealing with the consequences of two modern dictatorships shows that even a state based on the rule of law is strictly limited in such an attempt, thus making appropriate punishment of crimes which have been committed just as impossible as restitution equal to the suffering endured by the victims. Excessively concentrating on prosecuting those who have partaken of the exercise of state suppression, be it in a formal or informal capacity, may even lead to a distortion of historical reality because the guilt on the part of those giving the orders, and of the "leaders", cannot be discovered and punished to a comparable degree. See

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church (1993), no. 1869: "'Sinful structures' are the expression and the effect of personal sins. They induce their victims to also commit evil."

distorted perspective is, however, at the expense of the inner ability of a society and state to make peace.

The attempt to comprehensively process and clarify the mechanisms of totalitarian system structures may therefore not be treated like an unwelcome disturbance of one's peace. Rather, such clarification work provides for the first time an opportunity to counter the subsequent playing down of such structures, and hence the danger that such injustice, which is sanctioned by the state, could be repeated once again.

*Excursus: "Reconciliation with the threatened Creation" - on the ethical meaning of analogous use of the word "reconciliation".*

Guilt is visible not only in the multiplicity of social relations of individuals, and of whole peoples, but also where people are robbed of the basis of their existence, and where animals are tortured and their habitat destroyed. In the present ecological crisis, the consequences become increasingly evident of a perspective which considers the human relationship with both the living and the non-living natural environment as merely that of master and servant, and considers the question of the criteria for responsible use of the latter to be irrelevant. At the same time, it proves difficult to find the words to properly describe this relationship without referring to the relationship between mankind and nature as one between a person and a thing, whilst at the same time attempting to distinguish between this kind of relationship and one between human beings.

"Protecting Creation" is a manner of speech rather like the concept of "social sin". It gives form to the thought that the ever more urgent duty to maintain the "basis of existence"<sup>2</sup> has both normative, ethical relevance and a religious dimension. In dealing with the basis of both human and non-human existence, resources are affected which have not been created by human effort, but which the Creator left for mankind to use and care for responsibly. The way in which these resources are actually used, however, rarely allows one to conclude that mankind considers himself to be under such an instruction. Rather, he often misses this goal in a grievous and irreversible way. This not infrequently leads to suffering, both for fellow human beings and non-human creatures. This

<sup>2</sup> Cf. working paper of the German Justitia et Pax Commission "Bewahrung der Grundlagen des Lebens: Eine Aufgabe für die Kirchen" (Protection of the basis of existence - a task for the Churches), Bonn 1994 ARB 69 in the series of publications on justice and peace).

reverse side of all overexploitation - the fact that the consequences of this conduct are not neutral, but that others have to pay the price for it - is however often not realised even today. Instead, we still encounter strategies of self-pacification and self-justification, attempting, almost mechanically, to play down the consequences of overexploitation, and the suffering which it causes, as the price which has to be paid for development and progress. However, the negative effects of day-by-day overexploitation of the natural basis of existence appear to be increasingly counter-productive, even if one bases one's orientation on a rather narrow, short-term definition of progress.

"Reconciliation with threatened creation" - this phrase is intended to make it clear that it is not only a question of technically optimised adaptation of today's way of doing business to aims related to environmental compatibility and the protection of the basis for the existence of future generations. In the light of the guilt-ridden way of handling the resources which mankind is entrusted to protect, what is needed, rather, is a fundamental re-orientation. It is difficult to equate the intrinsic value of a non-human creature with the common understanding of human dignity, and even then this is only possible in a very indirect sense. It is, however, for this precise reason that this intrinsic value should be reflected by a form of speaking and reflecting which does not degrade animals and plants in particular to mere objects which are unable to suffer.

### III. How is reconciliation made possible?

Reconciliation is more than a temporary cease-fire. It describes the aim of a process which is often long and difficult, of the positive end to a conflict. Reconciliation which is successful in this way makes peace possible. Peace is the fruit of a persistent striving for reconciliation.

Reconciliation is not the only way to end a conflict. It cannot to be taken for granted<sup>3</sup>. In the effort to achieve it, it is a matter of identity and integrity - on the part of all those involved<sup>4</sup>. Reconciliation between people requires a great number of small steps to be taken together and towards one another. It requires the participation and involvement of all concerned. Even the best go-between in a process of reconciliation is not able to replace this. Without a patient effort, it is hardly conceivable to achieve a gradual reduction of enmity, without forgiveness. Processes of reconciliation frequently require a great deal of time, and may not be disturbed or prevented altogether by attempts to forcibly bring them about too early<sup>5</sup>.

If reconciliation is to work, what is needed, not lastly, is suitable language. Reconciliation is not a matter of fine words and solemn proclamations. Above all else it demands empathy, delicacy and credibility. This also involves seeking a form of language which avoids creating new wounds, at the same time as aiming to alleviate, or even heal, wounds which still hurt.

Nevertheless, it frequently remains uncertain whether reconciliation is successful in the final analysis, and this depends on many conditions and circumstances which are beyond

---

<sup>3</sup> In contrast to reconciliation, the alternative, the taking of revenge, is "conflict termination in terms of a victory" (Elisabeth Seidler).

"Reconciliation is needed where one person has incurred guilt in respect of another in such a way that further untroubled relations with one another appear to be impossible" (Klaus Jäger).

"Reconciliation is something which has to go deep down into the human soul. It is possible to call for it, but cannot be given, planned, prescribed or instructed ... It is a question here of a relationship between human beings. And this may not be restricted to a day, hour or week which has been designated specially for such a purpose" (Lev Kopelev). This also applies to reconciliation between entire peoples: "Guilt or innocence for a whole people does not exist. Guilt, like innocence, is not collective, but personal" (Richard von Weizsäcker).

human control. If one seeks "strategies for reconciliation", it will be necessary first of all to look for elements which are able to further and facilitate reconciliation, and then to name individual steps which experience has shown to be fundamental to this process. These include:

- *Conflict analysis: ascertaining reality and recognising causes.* It is a question in conflict analysis of making the causes of conflicts as objective as possible, of differentiating between various causal factors and opening them up to processing which is suited to their characteristics.
  
- *Willingness to act as a go-between: facilitating steps on the path to peace.* These are aimed at opening up opportunities of understanding and reconciliation, at limiting conflicts and at reducing their destructive force, as well as at establishing what steps might be taken in order to de-escalate the conflict. In addition to detailed knowledge of the conflict situation, selfless effort is needed, as well as an attempt to approach both parties to the conflict in the same manner (which should not be confused with an indifferent stance as to the question of which of those concerned is responsible for the conflict, and to what extent) and offering to help personally. The aims of such a go-between should be put in modest terms in order to be acceptable to both parties: for instance, making humanitarian aid possible, foregoing violence or other aggressive means of carrying on a conflict (such as propaganda), agreeing conditions for a cease-fire, starting negotiations for a possible peace treaty. Such go-betweens wish to awaken the hope that there may be ways of escaping from the confrontation which has become established and, in spite of all the entrenchment, to mobilise the forces able to contribute towards constructive conflict-solving. As the Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament says, "blessed are the peacemakers".
  
- *Empathy: learn to see with the other person's eyes.* This stance calls, as above, all to overcome unknowingness, disinterest, ignorance, arrogance, mutual aversions and indifference, to do without claims to dominate those who are (actually or only allegedly) inferior; to cast off arrogance and become more sensitive; to learn to distinguish between difference as regards value judgment and frequent confusion and tolerance, and a proper understanding of the situation. The situation and the conduct of the other person should be reflected upon in order to some extent to place one's own assessment of a person, as well as one's own emotions regarding that person, on a reasonably objective footing.

- *Seriousness: not minimising the suffering of others.* The topic of suffering should not be flogged to death, but neither should it be exaggerated nor minimised. What is needed is sincerity, not only with regard to the matter itself, but also in the intentions of those who seek reconciliation. It is a question of our "looking the truth in the eye as well as we are able - with no glossing over, and without one-sidedness" (Richard von Weizsäcker). Expression needs to be given to the suffering undergone by the victims (especially through the destruction of many of their hopes for life, the experience of human lowness and of shameful betrayal, often from their immediate surroundings) *and* of the perpetrators (for instance via the recognition that they have been misused, and through the loss of something in which they had mistakenly believed and for which they had fought). Again and again, both perpetrators and victims will have to ask what portion of blame attaches to each of them.
  
- *Memory: not seeking to suppress or forget.* This is a major prerequisite for sincerity: leaving out the question which gave rise to the situation which in turn caused the suffering, and how its repetition can be avoided, would mean halving the responsibility. A decisive element of any memory lies in it seeking not merely to keep alive the recollection, but to incorporate it as a past experience into the structure of a more human future<sup>6</sup>. Thus, it is possible for *our own historical memory to serve as a guide to how to conduct ourselves in the present*. This also, and particularly, applies where reconciliation or understanding is possible only between the victims' children, who have not personally experienced the suffering imposed on their parents. They may not feel the original intensity of the pain in the injuries and wounds. Opportunities to learn individually and collectively - important preconditions for preventing a historical catastrophe repeating itself - are nevertheless retained where **social pedagogics and political education** work approach the suffering of the victims to the greatest extent possible, and bring it to life.

---

remembering means recalling an event so honestly and so purely that it becomes a part of one's inner self. All of us, guilty or not, young or old, must accept the past. We are all affected by its consequences and have incurred a liability for it. Young and old must and can help each other to understand why it is vital to keep the memories alive. It is not a question of dealing with the past. That isn't possible. It cannot be changed after the fact, and we cannot make it undone. Anyone, however, who closes their eyes to the past will become blind to the present. If we refuse to remember inhumanity, we will be liable to **be** reinfected by this danger" (Richard von Weizsäcker).

- *Patience: give yourself and others time.* The willingness to recognise that a lot of time, and often a protected area, are needed in order to gradually remove the protective walls which alone made it possible to bear the bitterness of suffering; that reconciliation is a process where only a little can be achieved and repaired through steps which can be planned; that the strength on both sides not to give up is often more important in this process than anything else.
- *Knowledge of the tragic: distinguish between levels of moral fragility* - even without subjective guilt, or where this guilt is greatly reduced. Tragedies may result from a *lack of freedom* to take alternative options for activity; from a *lack of courage*, resulting from social integration into structures where there was an expectation of blind obedience which allowed the individual conscience to waste away; by means of *discouragement* resulting from a threat of sanctions which only martyrs can stand against (giving rise to the moral responsibility of those who gave the orders for such sanctions, who undermined individual morality in a most long-lasting way). This also includes *tolerance of ambivalence* and grey areas: in various phases of life, many people have been sometimes the victim, sometimes the perpetrator.
- *Allowing grief: bearing the pain of the victims and their tears.* "Grief is needed so that we do not wallow in resignation and indifference" (A word from the Christian Churches at the end of the War). *Human closeness* and *comfort* in despair, as an appropriate way of reacting to situations of grief which has not been overcome, foregoing minimising the depth of suffering felt because it is precisely in this way that the dignity of the sufferer can be hurt. Even an appropriate theology of reconciliation is *inconceivable* where there is no qualified theology of suffering; and this is only appropriate if it is able to sense the point at which it should also be silent. - Dealing with grief may make it indispensable to recognise that many remaining differences have to be accepted, and that inner *closeness is possible only at different grades and levels*; that the first thing which is needed is to feel precisely where strangeness and otherness are based which have been left in those who experienced and suffered it by different trails of varying history.

*ruthfulness:* "great peace with the perpetrators" (Ralph G. ...).  
 Great that this would be at the expense of the justice demanded by the victims. What is needed instead of this is for the awareness to be kept alive that *reconciliation is impossible without remorse and without a sign of willingness to make good.*

Despite all efforts to further a procedure of reconciliation, situations may arise in which human means fail. Trusting in God, we may nevertheless dare to take further steps on the path towards reconciliation. Anyone who prays for his or her "enemy" inwardly certainly comes step by step closer to him, and in doing so gains the strength to give good in return for bad. This also happens in situations where someone voluntarily makes atonement for the misconduct of a "perpetrator" (without the knowledge of the latter), bringing before God his own forfeit, his own sacrifice and personal suffering as a representative of the perpetrator so that God affords His special help to the other in order that he may change his ways.

#### IV. A just peace as the aim of reconciliation

A "future built on the memory of suffering" (Johann B Metz) which can be better than the past, which was full of suffering, is only possible where the question of justice is not circumvented or neglected in the process of increasing reconciliation. Reconciliation will only last in the long term if increased justice has been achieved in the reconciliation process. The latter is the actual aim of any sincere work towards reconciliation, even if justice in the full meaning of the word cannot be achieved, but one can only approach it as closely as possible.

The justice which is the subject of the quest in the case at hand means something different to pure legality or pure legal justice, which in some cases can even be a particularly subtle disguise for deep-seated injustice. It includes as a major element the *search for solutions for the future which do not conceal the seed of fresh injustice*. This includes the readiness to do without revenge and retaliation, "making opposing rights subservient to the concept of reaching an agreement" (Richard von Weizsäcker) and the willingness to take the first step. In this spirit, it is possible to answer a magnanimous gesture of reconciliation with just such a gesture, instead of giving in to the temptation of meeting it with new demands. This is all the more so if the person who took the first step is the person with the lesser responsibility, or who is innocent of the wrong which is to be appeased.

The question as to how to deal with a wrong which can be punished under criminal law, and what procedure to apply to those who committed it, gives rise to a problem related to justice. Debating granting an amnesty for the wrongs committed by defeated regimes should not be allowed to lead to the former perpetrators misusing the victims' willingness to become reconciled, in a desire to live together in the future, in order to quietly re-create the old hierarchies and power structures, and it becoming impossible to publicly establish serious wrongs as being punishable.

It is necessary to be clear: not only in dealing with the perpetrators, but also with regard to the victims, justice will not be done merely by clarifying the conditions and truth about the past wrongs were committed and the path towards criminal prosecution remain open. It is impossible for compensation to make good the suffering which the victims have undergone. Nevertheless, generous and unbureaucratic compensation in line with the dignity of the victims is one of the main prerequisites of it

being possible to integrate them into the reality of a society which is re-forming. Compensation is justified not only by the fact that the situation of the victims can be at least alleviated in this way, but also in the necessity of overcoming society's lack of empathy towards such situations. Compensation is also an act of tangible public recognition of a wrong which has been suffered. It creates a public space for stories of suffering, not lastly for processes of critical self-reflection in the majority society in the light of the historical "price" which had to be paid for the opportunities which are available to it at the present time.

It is often particularly difficult to marry together peace and justice in the international sphere. The absence of war, or the end of physical violence, is an indispensable step on the path towards peace, but is by no means identical with this aim. A cease-fire obtained and enforced by means of power politics may initially base its moral legitimacy on the achievement of having put an end to an orgy of murder and all types of violence which otherwise would have run its course. This legitimacy, however, is rapidly placed in danger if the opportunities afforded by this forced cease-fire are not used in order to create structures without which people and political communities in the conflict area are not enabled to pursue peace in the long term.

It is possible here only to refer to the necessity of creating the preconditions which make a just peace possible. They themselves cannot be explained in greater detail. For the foreseeable future, the questions arising in this field remain as an orientation for any attempt to develop a peace ethic in the light of the challenges facing us in the new millennium<sup>7</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. on this matter the working paper by the German *Justitia et Pax* Commission "From the 'just war' to the 'just peace'" Bonn 3 1994 (= ARB 63 in the series of publications on justice and peace).

## **V. Functions for specific reconciliatory activity in creating a European peace order**

In the light of the efforts towards the gradual establishment of a European peace order, the observations below are intended to describe specific fields of work which should lend concrete form to the above considerations. A fundamental perspective of non-partite political and social justice must guide our actions here - both in our own countries, and as a standard to be followed in foreign policy. Counter to the trend, this should be strengthened and defended in many places in Europe where, instead of the concept of solidarity, social Darwinistic policy programmes are favoured in interior policy, and a policy of purely national interests is pursued in foreign affairs. Against the background of the trend towards renationalising political thought, which can be seen not only in Central and Eastern Europe, one can observe the following: It is not a Europe of walls which is able to bring cross-border reconciliation, but only a continent which deprives its borders of their element of separation.

The process of establishing a peace order covering all of Europe must be understood and carried out as a joint task. What is needed is to practice a dialogue which is within our powers of imagination in order to counter the creation of new walls. In Germany itself, people's everyday experience in the new and old Länder (states) with the "other Germans" gives rise to all the old foreignness, and above all to new strangeness. Many people therefore feel that the "German Unity" project has failed from a social point of view. Different state and social systems existed for forty years, and the danger exists that what still separates the former East from the West not only anchors the old alienation, but also allows a new strangeness to be created.

This experience underlines the fact that all over in Europe, but particularly between neighbouring states, perceptions of ourselves and of others should be scrutinised as a matter of urgency, that history which is separate, and hence is differently perceived, should be the subject of joint reflection. False arrogance and certainty of oneself should be particularly avoided in relations between Western and Eastern Europeans. Notably, it is not to be forgotten that the recognition of an undercurrent of violence in everyday life with its simply meaningless

In the light of the multiplicity of political, social and economic changes, one should not lose sight of fundamental questions, for instance whether mankind really is in charge of running his own house, or whether he is valued too much in terms of his economic performance, or of profit. People in all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe must very quickly learn to cope with the new political and economic structures and rules which have been imposed on them. Especially, the need to take quick decisions gives the impression that the revision of these structures was largely organised "from the top". People's actual experience with the basic regulatory concepts of "democracy" and "market economy" nevertheless often makes it difficult for them to recognise the positive content of these aims. This particularly applies in a context where market economy concepts are implemented in a way which lacks any awareness of the social dangers of unbridled economic liberalism, but where democratic structures which are still fragile are unable to prevent the exercise of political power being removed from the hands of the governed. Under such circumstances, it seems to many people that the expectation that such models would be useful to society as a whole does not appear to have filtered down into their everyday lives, and, rather, seems like an ideology which has been forced upon them.

In many countries in Central and Eastern Europe, in addition to the solidarity ordered by the state, there was a solidarity which grew out of the difficulties faced as a result of living conditions as they were at that time. It becomes more difficult to retain this within the new framework. We continually hear news of thoughtless self-assertion on the part of both individual and collective actors, frequently with no consideration for fundamental interests and elementary moral principles. Instead of the state repression of former times, organised crime arises in places, and hardly faces any hindrances. The social consequences of this (corruption, long-term damage to the legal economy, etc.) are disastrous, especially for government, administrative and social systems which are forming and re-grouping.

This is why the fact must remain present as a political criterion in the public awareness that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe may not be removed from the dynamics of development of the Member States of the European Union. This applies with regard to further structuring increasingly resilient legal and constitutional systems, as well as the task of creating an economic framework which implements and ensures social and ecological standards. Those states also which do not appear able to gain rapid association with membership of the EU must be afforded sufficient opportunity to participate fairly,

so that the consolidation of their economic and overall social development can be successful.

Beyond the economic and social dimension, the fundamental changes have made many people feel insecure, and have robbed them of their orientation. The media reflect this not only in a dissonant cacophony, but also frequently provoke one to ask of whether they are adequately meeting their social and political responsibility. By means of this kind of reporting, it is possible for indispensable insights to be provided, but they can also be blocked. Especially in that discretionary area which is a result of the necessary freedom and independence of the press, it is all the more important for such people to afford higher priority to this duty to truthfulness than to those interests which push themselves to the fore in the light of the competition for frequencies, ratings and circulations.

The fight against the various manifestations of xenophobia and radicalism also belongs within this context. Whether, however, the urgency of this task is sufficiently realised depends in turn on how violations of human rights are dealt with which were committed under the old system. Such acts must be prosecuted, the victims must be cared for and the offenders must be pursued. At the same time, action should be taken in order to counter old rights being asserted in an insensitive manner (houses, property), as well as against speculation.

The problem of how to deal with breaches of the law as it stands, and with crimes against humanity which took place as a function of the political suppression carried out by the old regime, must be dealt with sensitively. It is not until the perpetrators have turned themselves in that it will be possible to deal with grief, together with the victims. It points to a better path than resignation to the trauma of a past which has not been dealt with (and with which it will soon be impossible to deal), and prevents the formation of a distorted memory of past events: "People have a fatal leaning towards remembering the good things which happened during bad times. It is possible to reap a political harvest from this, and there are people who do so" (Joachim Gauck). If one is willing to stand up to one's recollections with no subsequent beautification, it is possible to avoid the danger of nevertheless creating a seemingly rational justification for all the worst effects of suppression and lack of freedom. Only if we are able to look in the eyes the essence of all ideological thought which destroys values and human beings, we will also be best able to prevent events repeating themselves. Not lastly, the task arises here which is of eminent social and ethical significance, consisting of helping to form a fundamental stance which,

by overcoming selective perceptions, could lead to a "resistance" being formed to all kinds of ideologies rearing their heads once more.

These tasks are aimed at all social and political actors, in particular at the Churches. They must open themselves up to society, and contribute to the forming of an awareness in that society if they wish to have a mission to society which can be perceived as being of value. Christian churches and groups in Central and Eastern Europe in particular should allow the positive experience of community life as it was under the previous system to bear fruit in the new situation. The faith-related experiences of the past and of the present are of considerable significance for the furtherance of justice and peace, and for the maintenance of the basis of existence in our own countries, in Europe and in the One World.

## **VI. Reconciliation work as mission and obligation for Christians**

For Christians, the word "reconciliation" gains a special, additional and profound dimension as a function of the conviction of their faith. It gives us hope, awakens responsibility and places us under an obligation to be persistent.

### *The gift of hope*

All human failings, all sin and guilt, even institutionalised sin, have been stripped of their power by the willing act of redemption by Jesus Christ, his obedience even to the Cross, and may be turned to the good by reconciliatory acts on the part of human beings. Since we are already reconciled with God, we can also seek reconciliation with one another.

### *Awakened responsibility*

Jesus Christ's act makes us who bear His name particularly willing to work to serve reconciliation. God made his act of reconciliation dependent on our willingness to be reconciled with those of our fellow human beings who owe us a debt of guilt. In the same way, however, we cannot be reconciled with God if we turn our backs to the victims of unreconciled history. Rather, because reconciliation between human beings is directly concerned with the relationship between God and mankind, the human dimension becomes particularly serious, and gains its own depth.

### *The obligation to persist*

Our willingness to be reconciled should not wait for a first step to be taken by the other side, but should knowingly make the first move. It is more likely that the guilty party will change his or her ways if he or she sees that the victim is prepared to forgive. It is easier to ask for forgiveness when standing at an open door.

Readiness to be reconciled does not mean from the outset that punishment is unnecessary, or that a just punishment need not be imposed. That said, punishment has a healing effect only in circumstances where forgiveness of (moral) guilt can be counted on.

Efforts towards reconciliation should be inexhaustible. Disappointments, defeats and fresh entanglements in guilt should not be allowed to make us unable to attempt further steps in the reconciliation process. We are all incessantly dependent on God's forgiveness, and for that reason should tread the path of reconciliation with the greatest persistence in the light of His inexhaustible mercy.

Reconciliation is a word which has its meaning both in salvation-history and in eschatology. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the entire Creation has been reconciled with God. However, this is not revealed and completed until the end of the age, in the new Heaven and the new Earth. We come one step closer to this apocalyptic reality with every step we take on the path to reconciliation.

## VII. Recommendations to the European Ecumenical Assembly

The German Justitia et Pax Commission already submitted the following proposals to the German Ecumenical Assembly which was held in Erfurt in 1996. Nos. 1 and 5 were included in the Erfurt Message.

Since we are better able today than was the case in the past to exhaust the available potential for ecumenical co-operation, we would also like to submit these wishes once more for Graz. We ask that the European Ecumenical Assembly examine and implement them as a sign of new hope.

1. The Ecumenical Assembly is requested to establish a prayer community whose members pray a specific joint prayer every day for reconciliation and peace, and include in this current intercessions for particular centres of conflict. At the same time, the Ecumenical Assembly is requested to call upon the Christian churches to include in their intercessional prayers specific matters related to reconciliation.
2. The Ecumenical Assembly is requested to bring to life a community of fasting in solidarity with the hungry and the victims of unjust violence in the whole world whose members are willing to forego one meal on Friday of each week, and to donate the money thus saved to relief activities.
3. The Ecumenical Assembly is requested to call upon its participants, the members of grass-roots groups, Church members, and all people who wish to work for justice, peace and maintenance of the Creation to donate on a long-term basis a percentage of their net salaries which they themselves are to determine to one of the humanitarian relief agencies, to an organisation devoted to protecting human rights, or to an initiative to protect the basis of existence.

The Ecumenical Assembly is requested to call upon its delegates and the members of grass-roots groups to work in many cordes-in-arms possible for a world worth living who are able to undertake one or several of the abovementioned tasks.

5. The Ecumenical Assembly is requested to call upon the Churches to extend and network their various services for peace and reconciliation, in order in this way to be able more effectively to initiate and support processes of reconciliation in conflict situations.

**ARB 64/92**

Klaus Ebeling, Der Handel mit Rüstungsgütern als Anfrage an eine Ethik der Politik. Eine Problemskizze.  
1992. 51 Seiten. 5,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-29-2

**ARB 65/93**

Allgemeine Wehrpflicht - ethisch noch vertretbar? Sozial-ethische Kriterien zur Beurteilung der Allgemeinen Wehrpflicht. Mit Anlage: Sozial-ethische Aspekte zur Wehrgerechtigkeit. Vorgelegt von der Arbeitsgruppe "Dienste für den Frieden" der Deutschen Kommission Justitia et Pax.  
1995 (3. Auflage). 29 Seiten. 2,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-33-0

**ARB 66/94**

Der Konflikt im ehemaligen Jugoslawien. Vorgeschichte, Ausbruch und Verlauf. Nichtmilitärische und militärische Interventionsmöglichkeiten aus ethischer und politikwissenschaftlicher Sicht. Herausgegeben von der Arbeitsgruppe "Sicherheitspolitik" der Deutschen Kommission Justitia et Pax.  
1994 (3. Auflage). 100 Seiten. 6,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-41-1

**ARB 67/94**

Ist Europa friedensfähig? Perspektiven und Probleme einer europäischen Friedensordnung nach dem Ende des Kalten Krieges. Stellungnahme der Arbeitsgruppe Sicherheitspolitik der Deutschen Kommission Justitia et Pax.  
1994. 39 Seiten. 3,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-51-9

**ARB 68/94**

Ignaz Fischer-Kerli, Friedensdienste mit und ohne Waffen? Die Diskussion um die Dienste für den Frieden im Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend und in der deutschen Sektion von Pax Christi bis Ende der achtziger Jahre.  
1994. 151 Seiten. 8,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-54-3

**ARB 69/94**

Bewahrung der Grundlagen des Lebens - Eine Aufgabe für die Kirchen. Ein Beitrag zur aktuellen Diskussion. Vorgelegt von der Arbeitsgruppe "Bewahrung der Lebensgrundlagen" der Deutschen Kommission Justitia et Pax.  
1995 (2. Auflage). 82 Seiten. 6,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-55-1

**ARB 70/95**

Zukunft gesellschaftlicher Dienste. Teil I: Empfehlungen und Materialien zur Diskussion um eine allgemeine Dienstpflicht. Vorgelegt von der Arbeitsgruppe "Dienste für den Frieden" der Deutschen Kommission Justitia et Pax. Redaktion und Zusammenstellung der Dokumentation: Josef König.  
1995. 192 Seiten. 8,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-62-4

**ARB 71/96**

Karl Osner, Organisationsprozesse armer Frauen. Auswertungsbericht vom Juli 1993 zum Exposure- und Dialogprogramm der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) mit der Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) über Organisationsprozesse armer Frauen vom 22. bis 29.11.1992 in Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Indien. Entwicklung hat ein Gesicht bekommen. Bd. 3.  
1996. 114 Seiten. 8,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-74-8

**ARB 71/95e**

Participatory organizational processes of poor women. Evaluatory Report of the Exposure and Dialogue Programme organized by GTZ and SEWA in Ahmedabad, India, November 22 to 29, 1992. Development has got a Face. Volume 3.  
1995. 94 Seiten. ISBN 3-928214-67-5

**ARB 72**

Udo Marquardt, Bedrohung Islam? Christen und Muslime in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.  
1996. 112 Seiten. 6,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-73-X

**ARB 73**

Versöhnung suchen - **Leben gewinnen**. Texte und Materialien **zu den** Ökumenischen Versammlungen in Erfurt und Graz. Eine Handreichung der **Projektgruppe** Versöhnung der Deutschen Kommission Justitia et Pax  
1996. 75 Seiten. 6,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-78-0

**ARB 74**

Wolfgang Schneider-Barthold, Karl Osner, Sehen, begreifen, verarbeiten, anwenden. Handlungsorientierte Fortbildung durch Exposure- und Dialogprogramme. Reihe: Entwicklung hat ein Gesicht bekommen. Band 4.  
1996. 90 Seiten. 6,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-76-4

## **Gerechtigkeit und Frieden - *Arbeitspapier***

---

### **ARB 75**

Karl Osner, Claudia Warning, Lernen von Paniben. Mitarbeiterfortbildung durch Exposure- und Dialogprogramme. Reihe: Entwicklung hat ein Gesicht bekommen. Band 6.  
1996. VI + 140 Seiten. 8,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-77-2

### **ARB 76**

Claudia Warning, Karl Osner, Armutsbekämpfung in Ghana. Aufbau von Kooperationsbeziehungen zur selbsthilfeorientierten Armutsbekämpfung. Reihe: Entwicklung hat ein Gesicht bekommen. Band 5.  
1996. VII + 125 Seiten. 8,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-76-4

### **ARB 77**

Udo Marquardt, Miteinander leben. Christen und Muslime in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland.  
1996. 168 Seiten. 8,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-82-9

### **ARB 79**

Peter Schulte-Holtey, Minen wissen nicht, wann Frieden ist. Bericht und Dokumente zum Engagement des Bundesdeutschen Initiativkreises für das Verbot von Landminen.  
1996. 148 Seiten. 8,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-84-5

### **ARB 83**

Versöhnung - Gabe Gottes und Quelle neuen Lebens. Texte und Materialien zur Zweiten Europäischen Ökumenischen Versammlung in Graz 1997. Eine Handreichung der Projektgruppe Versöhnung der Deutschen Kommission *Justitia et Pax*. Teil 1.  
1997. 26 Seiten. 2,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-96-9

### **ARB 83e**

Reconciliation - A Gift from God and a Source of New Life. Englischsprachige Ausgabe von ARB 83.  
1997. 27 Seiten. 2,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-97-7

### **ARB 83f**

Réconciliation - Don de Dieu, source de vie nouvelle. Französischsprachige Ausgabe von ARB 83.  
1997. 25 Seiten. 2,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-98-5

### **ARB 83r**

Versöhnung - Gabe Gottes und Quelle neuen Lebens. Russischsprachige Ausgabe von ARB 83.  
1997. 27 Seiten. 2,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-99-3

---

**Porto/Verpackung** bis 2 Exemplare 1,50 DM, ab 3 Exemplare 3,-- DM. Bei Bestellung bitte **Verrechnungs-**scheck oder Betrag in Briefmarken mitsenden.

Bestellung an  
Justitia **et Pax**, Adenauerallee 134, D-53113 Bonn  
Telefon (0228) 103-217      Telefax (0228) 103-318

## Verzeichnis der Publikationen

### Gerechtigkeit und Frieden - *Dokumentation*

---

#### **DOK 31/91**

Entwicklung hat ein Gesicht bekommen. Lebensberichte von dreizehn Frauen in Bangladesh zur People's Economy. Interpretation von Lebensberichten. Autoren: Gudrun Kochendörfer-Lucius und Karl Osner. 1991. (3. Auflage 1995) 100 Seiten. 8,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-12-8

#### **DOK 31/91e**

Development Has Got a Face. 1991 8,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-16-0

#### **DOK 32/91**

Der ferne Nächste. Partnerschaften von Diözesen und Pfarrgemeinden mit Ländern der Dritten Welt - Erfahrungen, Chancen, Aufgaben. Herausgegeben von Harry Neyer. 1991. 58 Seiten. 5,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-14-4

#### **DOK 33/92**

Die Todesstrafe. Bestandsaufnahme und Bewertung aus kirchlicher Sicht. Von Michael Sierck. 1992. IV + 156 Seiten. 8,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-11-X

#### **DOK 35/92**

Blick zurück nach vorn. Erklärungen zu 500 Jahre Lateinamerika aus der katholischen Kirche im deutschsprachigen Raum. Herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Peter Rottländer. 1992. 102 Seiten. 8,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-34-9

#### **DOK 36/92**

Guatemala: Auf dem Weg zum Frieden. Dokumente zum Friedensprozeß und zum Inhalt der Friedensverhandlungen. Herausgegeben von Gudrun Molkenitin. 1992. 91 Seiten. 8,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-35-7

#### **DOK 37/94**

Peru: Düstere Zukunft? Entwicklungen seit dem Staatsstreich vom 5.4.1992. Hg. von Gabriela M. Sierck. 1994. 74 Seiten. 6,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-49-7

#### **DOK 38/94**

Militär als Friedensstifter? Friedensethische Überlegungen zur außenpolitischen Neuorientierung Deutschlands. Dokumentation einer gemeinsamen Studienkonferenz der Deutschen Kommission Justitia et Pax und der Thomas-Morus-Akademie Bensberg. Herausgegeben von Thomas Hoppe und Harry Neyer. 1994. 150 Seiten. 8,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-60-8

#### **DOK 39**

Shramshakti - Die Arbeitskraft der Frauen. Bericht der indischen Nationalen Kommission für selbständige Frauen und Frauen im informellen Sektor. Herausgegeben von SEWA - Self Employes Women's Association. 1997. XLII und 257 Seiten. 12,-- DM ISBN 3-928214-90-X

---

**Porto/Verpackung** bis 2 Exemplare 1,50 DM, ab 3 Exemplare 3,-- DM. Bei Bestellung bitte Verrechnungsscheck oder Betrag in Briefmarken mitsenden.

#### **Bestellung an**

Justitia et Pax, Adenauerallee 134, D-53113 Bonn  
Telefon (0228) 103-217      Telefax (0228) 103-318