«All that contributes to democracy contributes to peace»

A conversation with Edelberto Torres Rivas on the 20th Anniversary of Interpeace

Security and democracy

Fifteen years later: Reflexions on the experience of POLSEDE and its usefulness in the present

Youth

On the way to a new championship: sports clubs as a hope for change in Honduras,

We understand that peace is not the simple absence of violence, but the prevalence of a framework of social and political relationships that are free from coercion or violence thus allowing groups and individuals in society to pursue their needs and aspirations without fear, with justice and in security.

Interpeace, Strategic Position Paper.

20 YEARS OF BUILDING PEACE

Contributors

On the way to a new championship: sports clubs as a hope for change in Honduras, one of the most violent countries in the world
Isabel Aguilar Umaña has been working for Interpeace since 2008 and currently holds the position of Regional Director of the Central America Youth Program. From 2003 – 2008 she worked as Coordinator of the Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization System of Propaz Foundation and from 1996 – 2003 was responsible for Communications for the Propaz Program, that was implemented in Guatemala by the Organization of American States (OAS). Isabel is an expert in the design and facilitation of dialogue processes as well as the alternative conflict resolution. She has participated as a facilitator in public and political negotiations and dialogue seeking conflict resolution and in the design and monitoring of public policy. She has more than 10 years of experience in the field of peacebuilding, consensus building, community organization, monitoring and evaluation, as well as the systematization of social transformation experiences. During the last 5 years, she focused her work in youth-related violence, prevention, rehabilitation and reinsertion programs in Central America. This includes designing public policy proposals, working with youth networks, advocacy, and intervention with vulnerable and at risk youth. Since August 2012 she has been collaborating with the truce process between Salvadorian gangs.

All that contributes to democracy, contributes to peace, a conversation with Edelberto Torres Rivas
Arnoldo Gálvez, Interpeace LAO Communications Officer and Otto Argueta, Interpeace LAO Learning and Policy Officer

Fifteen years later: reflexions on the experience of POLSEDE and its usefulness in the present
Bernardo Arévalo de León is Senior Peacebuilding Adviser at Interpeace's International Peacebuilding Advisory Team -IPAT. Bernardo has been involved and working with Interpeace since 1996. Between 2011 and 2013 he served as Deputy Director General for Research and Development of Interpeace. Between 1996 and 1998 he was involved in managing a consensus building process in his native Guatemala, following the signature of the Peace Accords. Between 1999 and 2005 Bernardo coordinated a series of joint UNDP-Interpeace initiatives that applied participatory strategies to Security Sector Reform goals, first as Director of one of the projects and later as the head of Interpeace's regional office for Latin America. Bernardo is the author of several articles and books on issues such as democratization, civil-military relations and peacebuilding. Prior to his involvement with Interpeace, Bernardo served in Guatemala's Foreign Service for over 12 years, including as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and as Ambassador to Spain.

Photos

interpeace

With the support of

SVENSKA POSTKOD LOTTERIET

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

Twenty years ago, a group of eighty individuals met in Cartigny, Switzerland, motivated by a desire to understand and support an improved form of management of the problems associated with the processes of reconstruction and reconciliation in post-conflict situations. The majority of those who met at Cartigny were from countries that had recently emerged from conflicts and confrontations, in addition to representatives from international development agencies and some social scientists. During the meeting, it was agreed that improved mechanisms for interaction between parties involved were necessary to address those problems specific to post-conflict contexts, that is, of societies which are beginning to leave conflict and confrontation behind in order to start on the road to peace. To that effect, it became indispensable to think about methodologies that would strengthen the bonds of confidence among the various actors, provide legitimacy to the processes of dialogue, and establish open and honest channels of communication. Thus, the methodology of participatory action-research, PAR, as employed during the 1960s and 1970s in community contexts, was evaluated for its possible use, after the necessary adaptations, at a national level, that is, from a micro-social level to a macro-social one. The added value of this methodology lay in its conception of human beings as social subjects in constant interaction with the environment, in which the individual is able to recognize herself or himself, become aware of her or his personal worth, and create the conditions for transforming reality. Upon this foundation, the War-torn Societies Project (WSP) was set up within the United Nations, later to become the International Peacebuilding Alliance (Interpeace).

The WSP supported wide-ranging and inclusive dialogues in four countries emerging from conflict scenarios, albeit within very different contexts: Mozambique, Eritrea, Somalia, and Guatemala. The results of the project made it clear that it was important to think of peace not only within immediate post-war contexts but that it was fundamental that the logic of a short term project should be replaced by that of the long term. Peace, as we know well, is not a point of destination but is, in itself, a process.

Ten years after that meeting in Cartigny, the WSP changed its name to Interpeace as a means of unifying its mission statement: to strengthen the capacities of societies to manage conflict without the use of violence or coercion, by assisting national actors in their efforts to achieve social and political cohesion and to help the international community (and, especially, the United Nations) in its efforts to consolidate peace in the world, by means of a better understanding and response to the challenges of creating local capacities that will improve social and political cohesion.

Interpeace has regional offices in West Africa, East Central Africa, and Latin America, and operates under a decentralised scheme in more than eighteen countries in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. As of 2002, Interpeace opened a Regional Office for Latin America in Guatemala with the idea of establishing a regional presence for the support of research and dialogue processes that address critical problems of a political and social agenda in situations of political or ideological polarization, social rupture, and institutional weakness. Since then, the Regional Office for Latin America has supported peace-building processes in the seven countries of the Central American region in specific areas such as youth, security, justice, and conflict transformation.

In commemoration of these twenty years of existence, the Interpeace Regional Office for Latin America is publishing this first anniversary issue of our journal: a look at some of the substantive problems that the office has been involved with under its different programmes during these years and, at the same time, a look at some of the historical contexts in which our work has taken place. The objective of the journal is, thus, to provide a space for reflexion on the challenges and opportunities for the construction of peace in our region, in addition to celebrating these years that we have laboured in the pursuit of reconciliation and the reestablishment of bonds of trust, non-violence, and peace.

Ana Glenda Tager
Director
Interpeace Regional Office for Latin America

ON THE WAY TO A NEW CHAMPIONSHIP

Sports clubs as a hope for change in Honduras,
one of the most violent countries in the world.

By Isabel Aguilar Umaña*

When sports events are held – especially in the case of soccer – stadiums are filled with renewed enthusiasm. People pour in, mostly young folk, brimming with vitality and energy. On the day of a classic game, noisy vendors congregate within the installations and the surrounding areas; reporters join in to provide coverage of one of the activities that most attracts the attention and the spirit of the public (and, therefore, provides important profits for the media); owners of rival sports clubs are there, too, in the hope of continuing to arrange lucrative deals; and, of

course, in attendance are families and thousands of young spectators who desire – sometimes to extents that are incomprehensible for some – to see their team win. As magnets that attract attention, the stadium, the competition, the game itself, bring together all the eagerness and enthusiasm of thousands of young fans who, in countries like Honduras, have placed their vital hopes in soccer, because it is impossible or nearly a privilege to place them elsewhere: in the country there are no opportunities. Or there are none or they are extremely scarce, reserved for a small and privileged percentage of the population. Soccer, a mass-spectator sport

that with the rise of communications and information technologies has gained notoriety, presence, and relevance in the lives of many people, occupies a key place in many contemporary societies. Honduras is a good example of this. Its population is mostly young (1) and characterized by fervent soccer-related activities which, on occasion, define the country's agenda to the point of national paralysis. The cipotes, as children and adolescents are called in this Central American country, play soccer since they learn to walk; a small plastic ball, or an orange, plus a couple of markers in lieu of goal posts on a dusty street, is all that is needed.

Not surprisingly, when the national team plays an international match the streets of the principal cities are deserted, even though it be a regular work day; or that the best players are elevated to the category of heroes, all the more so in a socio-political environment where there are no models worthy of admiration.

As can be imagined, Honduras brings together its passion for soccer with acute levels of poverty and inequality that join forces, in a sort of overwhelming vicious circle, with a set of State institutions and social elites that have been unable to further the well-being of the citizenry. In the face

of the country's socioeconomic problems, the State's institutions manifest weaknesses that range from an absence of technically valid and legitimate public policies, from a political point of view, to a lack of financial resources necessary to implement them. Ignorance, abandonment, and marginalization are rife. In short, complete underdevelopment.

Within this framework there thrive, also, a number of indicators that place Honduras in the position of the most violent country in Central America and one of the most violent in the world. Even though the Observatory for Violence of the National

Autonomous University of Honduras (UNAH) (2) has pointed out a slight decrease in the homicide rate in the country – it dropped from 85.5 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants to 79 – the numbers remain extremely high and, above all, unacceptable. (3) When speaking in such terms, it should be remembered that the average world homicide rate is 9. It is equally unacceptable that this scenario of death affects, above all, adolescents and young people, a segment of the population that is the country's present and future, upon which rest its possibilities for transformation and growth. When placed within their respective age groups, the numbers pro-

«The homicide rate only reveals the tip of an iceberg that also contains all sorts of violence, in all their possible combinations and some which are even unimaginable.»

vide an immediate description of the horror: the homicide rate per 100,000 under the age of seventeen is 150, and it is 190 for those above eighteen.

In the face of so much data, it is indispensable to acknowledge that the homicide rate only reveals the tip of an iceberg that also contains all sorts of violence, from verbal to institutional, as well as psychological and physical, in all their possible combinations and some which are even unimaginable. The scenarios in which this violence is played out are everywhere: the family, the school, the street, the pages in the newspapers, the busses, the market

places, the State's institutions, the municipalities, the rural areas, and, of course, the stadiums. The actors in these scenarios are, similarly, everyone, be they victims of a society accustomed to settling its disagreements with aggression or perpetrators of the most varied type: drug traffickers, gang members, criminal organizations, corrupt policemen, abusive mothers and fathers, harassment by teachers and bosses in the work place, extortionists, aggressive youth, complicit government officials, "good, law abiding citizens" who keep a gun and use it when they consider it necessary, hard core supporters of a sports team...

which are also abundant in the country). There are no nuanced analyses that distinguish the individual case from those that can be applied to the barra as a whole. Barras are groups of young people who come together basically to express their deep liking for a given club or sports team. A leader of one of the main barras in Honduras defines quite precisely some of the differences that set them apart: "The spectator is the person that, suddenly, when able, shows up at a soccer stadium. This person loves her/ his team one hundred percent. This fan is a person, as I see it, who is a frequent spectator but does not belong to an organized group that backs a team. A member of a bar-

masse, marching to the rhythm of drums and song, carrying banners and signs that identify their barra and their team. The day their team plays, they fill the streets – or take them over, better said – and paralyze traffic and stop all other activities near the stadium. The police surround them.

Barras are made up mostly of young people between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, with some exceptions. Sometimes there are adults, but individuals under eighteen are generally not accepted in order to avoid problems. Most of a barra's members are from poor and dysfunctional homes. Most young barristas do not study or do so beyond their

archal practices which pervade all aspects of gender relations in Honduras. A division of labour along gender lines can be seen when they prepare their team's insignias: the women sew the signs and prepare the decorations, while the men look for the means to purchase the materials. This discriminatory division of labour is also evidenced in the few women in positions of leadership.

In Honduras the best-known barras are those that identify with the teams of the National League, among which two stand out: the Ultra Fiel (Very Faithful) barra of the Club Olimpia soccer team, and the Revolucionarios (Revolutionaries) barra of the Club Motagua

soccer team. Both of these teams are based in Tegucigalpa, the nation's capital, but their fans can be found all over the country, as well as their barras. For example, the Ultra Fiel barra was born in San Pedro Sula on 17 August 1990; it currently has some 15,000 members, organized in peñas (local sections of the sport clubs) and groups under a national leadership. (7) On the other hand, the Revolucionarios, the barra of the Motagua soccer team, was founded on 29 September 1998 and has about 11,000 followers distributed in comandos (task forces) under a national leadership of two individuals. (8) Positions of leadership in a barra, or a peña or comando, are achieved through seniority, after

years of proven fidelity, commitment to the team, a desire to serve, companionship, and solidarity.

In addition to high levels of organization and communication, these two barras are distributed in identifiable territories (neighbourhoods, communities, and specific areas within stadiums); they possess distinctive symbols and insignias and, perhaps most importantly, they operate under codes of conduct that lay down obligations within the organization. This means that they are frames of reference that, as opposed to other social spaces, can be coherent with young people's needs.
Each barra has its own identity which is shared by its thousands

«Honduran children play soccer since they learn to walk; a small plastic ball, or an orange, plus a couple of markers in lieu of goal posts on a dusty street, is all that is needed»

Barras: sports clubs in exclusionary societies

It is common that the Honduran collective imagination, especially in urban areas, perceives barras – groupings of youth who are fans of a particular sports team – in eminently negative terms. The members of a barra are equated with gangs and judged uncritically to be juvenile delinquents who, therefore, must be feared (if one is a "law abiding citizen") or persecuted (if one is a police officer on the beat near a stadium on the day of a game, or an active member of a criminal gang that engages in extrajudicial killings,

ra is that person who does belong to a group that supports a sports club and thus is not concerned if a team wins or loses because she/ he will always be supporting that team." (4) In this sense, belonging to a barra entails a maximum level of support to and commitment with a given team.

Barras express support, collectively and in a highly organized way, for the team of their preference: "The fans in the stands express their emotion, their euphoria, while we, as a barra, provide the carnival atmosphere, that sense of affection for the team." (5) The barras show up at the stadium en

age; they live in violence-prone areas of the country's principal cities; their fathers and mothers are unemployed or underemployed or have emigrated (generally to the United States) in search of work. (6) As it happens, there are exceptions: some barra members have university degrees, hold a full-time job, or are even owners of businesses that provide them with an income, albeit minimally satisfactory. They are structured in hierarchical terms and are made up of both men and women. Even though they enjoy a certain gender balance in numbers, their activities reflect a form of organization that reproduces the wider patri-

of members. This is very significant, especially when referred to the socialization process of adolescence and youth which is, after all, one in which each individual must come to terms with her or his own subjective identity as it emerges from the tension produced by the contradictions of – and preferences with – pre-existing models. Bear in mind that "… the ways in which subjectivity is produced are not universal nor limited in time but defined within specific social and cultural conditions." (9) Thus, adolescents and young people from countries with low levels of human development (10), riddled with social problems under a common denominator of crisis, find themselves on the

been pointed out that "a fundamental shift [has taken place] at the base of subjective reality: the promise held out by the State has been replaced by that of the market. It is not longer a matter of citizens but of consumers… The Nation-State, through its principal institutions – the family and the school – has ceased to be the basic mechanism for instilling 'morality' in the individual." (11) The churches of different denominations are also not up to the task to assume this role and attract thousands of adolescents and young people to its ranks because, as they themselves recognize, their guidelines are rigid and cannot allow or channel free expression.

are the product of the decline of social institutions, but they also contribute to foster that system of centrifugal forces that tend to transform the citizens in consumers, to expel individuals, to sideline them: "In an authoritarian society, with a low educational level in transcendental terms, the critical elements required to bond or belong to something are very simple, primitive, and induced. Thus, there is fanaticism in religion, fanaticism in politics, fanaticism in the defence of territory, fanaticism in sport. It is obvious that soccer as a social phenomenon has grown through the media. This fanaticism promotes an addiction to consume which the sports system has to offer,

more ways than one by the activities of the barras. Thousands of young people fall for this overwhelmingly attractive crowd-puller, which may substitute for the construction of a personal life project or make the individual forget about it, at least momentarily, while the social environment might eventually offer better opportunities.

The sports barras: thuggish barras or actors for peace?

As can be imagined, the barras of rival teams are themselves rivals. In the case of Honduras, many barras have expressed such intense hatred within the stadiums that they have engaged recently in beatings and brawls that exceed past experience, in which people have been injured and even killed. But the surrounding areas of a stadium and the neighbourhoods where rival barras operate can also turn violent. In other words, the barras in Honduras have descended into a third type of sport violence as defined by Randall Collins: "An extremely tense form of violence beyond acceptable bounds is the sports violence associated with hooligans, which turns into a violence which has nothing to do with the rhythm of the game." (13) In other words, the approach of a contest between sports clubs that are historic rivals can exacerbate tensions, but these remain a constant at different times and with varying frequency, and can even acquire a dynamic all their own when joined up with territorial concerns of actors which are foreign

to barras (drugs and arms sellers, gangs, or corrupt State security officers, for example), until the situation turns into a source of renewed and systemic violence and citizen insecurity.

The notoriety which precedes the sports barras can be found in the involvement of some of their members in violent episodes and even criminal acts. However, the way the media handles these situations means that the barras in general – that is, not just some isolated individuals – are perceived as a social problem. Politicians tend to take advantage of violent episodes in stadiums to magnify even more the negative image of the barra members and, by extension, that of young people in general. In this manner, they can continue to justify their hard-fisted and obstinate attitude, regardless of the fact that these approaches have demonstrated their failure, if it were not obvious enough, in Central America.

The police have been singled out on more than one occasion by the very members of barras and human rights organizations as an institution that contributes to the discrimination experienced by young people, when they persecute them and use unnecessary levels of violence, in clear violation of their human rights. As young people have said: "They [the police] believe that we are engaged only in crime… And that is our life, according to the police, running around making trouble. They even blame us if the sun is clouded over in the morning. We are blamed even for that!" (14)

Many young people from rival barras are a product of their environment and of their times. It cannot be otherwise. For this reason, in countries like Honduras today, they have internalized aggressive and violent patterns of behaviour as a normal response in the face of social conflict. In a more profound sense, their conduct is based on a patriarchal viewpoint that is current in society insofar as patriarchy postulates the supremacy of the strongest by equating force with power. But they are also the product of a country that is today considered one of the most violent in the world. They live there. The episodes of violence, therefore, are merged into a spiral whose path is full of increased suffering because impunity in Honduras is nearly complete.

Notwithstanding, the leadership of the barras like La Ultra Fiel and Los Revolucionarios have begun to occupy public spaces to do more than support the team of their choice. They organize sports events with the younger members to provide for moments of recreation; they help with reforestation projects and undertake clean-up campaigns in the cities. In recent times, they were troubled by the coup d'etat of June 2009, as were many Hondurans, and took part in the citizens' movement that demanded a reinstatement of constitutional and democratic rule in the country. They participated actively and were a key player in the design and implementation of the policy to prevent violence against children, adolescents, and young people that was enacted by

«Many young people from rival barras are a product of their environment and of their times. They have internalized aggressive and violent patterns of behaviour as a normal response in the face of social conflict»

sidelines and at great risk for lack of safe spaces for socialization that would enable them to build their identity in a positive and safe way, in contexts of harmonious coexistence and under social benchmarks that transmit universally recognized values.

In Honduras, barras are powerful magnets for young people precisely because other social environments do not offer a sense of belonging nor appropriate and functional spaces for the gradual discovery and definition of their own place in the world. As is well known, the family unit is in crisis, as well as the State. It has

As things stand, in countries where systems of State-supported social safety nets are inexistent or insufficient, and where families or other social institutions have not adapted to undertake their social functions as required by contemporary life, barras and other forms of youth groups – such as gangs – represent an opportunity for thousands of young individuals, a space where they can construct their identity, in safety, trust, and brother/sisterhood. As many barristas point out, the barra is a family for them, a place where they feel accepted and can express themselves freely. Therefore, in Honduras barras

not only attendance at a stadium but all the collateral products, as well as the never-ending hours of monotonous sports commentary, especially that of soccer, that take one's mind off, for example, the small increase in the minimum salary or why Honduras does not have a more just society. This bunch of sports programmes are not random occurrences: they play a role, not just by providing employment for many commentators, but as a means to profoundly alienate society." (12)

The paraphernalia and the drama which surround soccer as a mass spectator sport are increased in

president Porfirio Lobo in February 2013. They attend, as a barra, courses in leadership and have begun to make their voice heard to tell society and the authorities that they are not the problem but, rather, as young people, they have provided ample proof that they are part of the solution to the deep-rooted conflicts that affect everyone.

In this sense, it is only a matter for the counterparts of the barras – in other words, the Government, the mass media, the owners of the sports clubs and other businesspeople, the Legislative Assembly, and other relevant actors and sectors of Honduran society – to lend their ears. Otherwise, they will not only be helping to stigmatize the young people of Honduras even more, but the spiral of violence, which to date seems to have no end in sight, will be dangerously strengthened. A new championship must be played out in the field of prevention. There everyone can find hope and dignity.

We understand that conflict is natural to society. We understand conflict to be the confrontation of differing interests, ideas and agendas that is inherent to social and political life. Moreover, we believe that conflict can play a positive role in social dynamics as a driving force of innovation and change, when effectively managed.

Interpeace, Strategic Position Paper.

NOTES

1. According to the National Statistics Institute (Instituto Nacional de Estadística) of Honduras, there are 2,985,000 young people between the ages of 15 and 29, which is equivalent to 35% of a total population 8,555,072. See: www.ine.gob.hn

2. El Heraldo, 29 February 2014, p. 29.

3. Note should be taken, as reflected in the information issued by the Observatory of the UNAH, that San Pedro Sula, the second most important city in the country, has a homicide rate that makes it the most violent city in the world: 193.4 per hundred thousand inhabitants. La Ceiba has a homicide rate of 140.7 per hundred thousand inhabitants.

4. Interview with Melvin Cerbellón, in the documentary Haceme barra (roughly translated "Support me"). A copy of the documentary was given to the author by the video's director, produced by Cría Films with the support of the Cultural Centre of Spain in Tegucigalpa and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID). Further reference to this documentary will be by its name.

5. Interview with young member of a barra in the documentary "Haceme barra".

6. According to Melvin Cerbellón, when interviewed by the author, 70% of the members of barras live in the most marginal areas of the country.

7. Information provided to the author by Melvin Cerbellón, a leader of La Ultrafiel barra.

8. Information provided to the author by Carol Bustillo, co-leader of Los Revolucionarios barra.

9. Duschatzky, S. and Corea, C. (2002). Chicos en banda. Los caminos de la subjetividad en el declive de las instituciones. Argentina: Paidós, p. 21.

10. According to the United National Development Programme (UNDP), in 2012 Honduras had a human development index of 0.632, which placed it in position number 120 in the world classification and number 30 among the 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Honduras placed higher only in relation to Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Haití. See: http://www.hn.undp.org/content/honduras/es/home/presscenter/articles/2013/03/14/informe-sobre-desarrollo-humano-2013/ Consulted on 20 March 2014.

11. Ibid., pp. 21 and 26.

12. Interview with the Honduran sociologist, Álvaro Cálix, as appearing in the documentary "Haceme barra".

13. Collins, R. (2008). Violence. A Micro-Sociological Theory. Princeton University Press, p. 282.

14. Interview with young member of a barra, in documentary "Haceme barra".

ALL THAT CONTRIBUTES TO DEMOCRACY, CONTRIBUTES TO PEACE»

A conversation with Edelberto Torres Rivas on the 20th Anniversary of Interpeace.

By Arnoldo Gálvez and Otto Argueta*

The War-Torn Societies Project (WSP), which years later became Interpeace, began to operate in Guatemala at the beginning of 1997. It was created within the United Nations to assist the international community and national actors to better understand and respond to the complex challenges faced by a society that was emerging from war. Matthias Stiefel, the founder of Interpeace, offered the post of director of the project to Edelberto Torres Rivas (Guatemala, 1932), a researcher and sociologist whose name was mentioned unanimously during a wide-ranging search for the position.

To celebrate Interpeace's beginnings in the region and to revisit the contributions of WSP-Guatemala, we interviewed Edelberto on this and other matters and, subsequently, after afternoon coffee in his apartment, we received rigorous answers, all of them loaded with an indefatigable and strict critical outlook which does not allow for easy optimism, nor immediate congratulations or self-complacency.

Upon the signing of an Accord to Establish a Firm and Lasting Peace, in December 1996, between the Government of Guatemala and National Revolutionary Union of Guatemala (URNG), a three-decade long armed struggle in the country came to an end which, at the same time, represented the culmination of ten years of negotiations that involved four democratically elected governments. The end result of these efforts was a dozen agreements aimed espe-cially at preventing another tragedy like this ever happening again in Guatemala. The war left behind, according to numbers prepared by the Commission for Historical Clarification of the United Nations, a total of 200,000 dead, 45,000 disappeared, and more than one million displaced persons. In 1996, together with this still fresh memory of immense suffering, there emerged, simultaneously, a desire for peace: an end to the war was perceived by many sectors as an opportunity for dialogue, for the reestablishment of bonds of trust, for overcoming fear, in sum, for reconciliation.

Within this context the War-Torn Societies Project (WSP) was born; it began to function in Guatemala at the beginning of 1997. The WSP, that years later would become the International Alliance for the Consolidation of Peace (Interpeace), was founded within the United Nations tasked with helping the international community and national actors to better understand and respond to the complex challenges of a society emerging from a war.

When the project began to operate in Guatemala, it already had some lessons learned previously in Eritrea and Mozambique as told by Edelberto Torres Rivas and Bernardo Arévalo de León in the introduction to From Conflict to Dialogue: the WSP in Guatemala: "... in November 1994, a meeting was held in Cartigny, Switerzerland, with about 80 people in attendance, half of them from countries that were emerging from conflictive situations, and the other half from multilateral, bilateral, and non-governmental cooperation agencies, together with a small group of social scientists interested in lending a hand to resolve the problems associated with the processes of reconstruction and reconciliation in post-conflict contexts. As the meeting progressed, the need became evident to better understand the complex characteristics of these new emergency situations, especially the interaction among the actors and the problems involved in the processes of reconstruction and reconciliation. In addition, the possibility of using the "participatory action-research methodology" was evaluated. This methodology involves research and a process of social intervention by which the participants in the process become active subjects and protagonists in a project that transforms their reality, as well as creating knowledge. This was the origin of the WSP and four countries were chosen to apply this methodology: Eritrea, Mozambique, Guatemala, and Somalia.

After some preliminary explorations undertaken during 1995 and 1996, the WSP-Guatemala was publicly launched on 9 January 1997. This event brought together a very wide and plural representation of diverse political and social organizations as had never been seen in Guatemala and constituted the first of a series of meetings that continued during the following fifteen months with no slacking of attendance by the participating organizations. "The problem addressed by WSP-Guatemala involves the construction of confidence in the country. The destruction of human lives during 35 years weakened universal values and social norms for the respect of life and human dignity... This type of destruction requires significantly greater efforts of reconstruction than those required for material reconstruction." ("Reconstruyendo Guatemala. Las modalidades del WSP." Working paper. Guatemala, October 1996). As a consequence, the project's objective in Guatemala was to create analytical and operative capacities to document experiences in peace building, analyze them through participatory research, and extract lessons and translate them into policy recommendations while, at the same time, facilitating dialogue among the principal internal and external actors, thereby starting a process of collective analysis and problem resolution (Rubén Zamora and Christophe Bouvier, "Un proyecto para la transición, reflexiones en torno a WSP-Guatemala").

To head the project, Matthias Stiefel, the founder of Interpeace, called on Edelberto Torres Rivas (Guatemala, 1932), sociologist and researcher, following an extensive series of consultations which unanimously mentioned his name. Torres Rivas is, without a doubt, the most important social scientist in the region, having reflected on and explained Central America for

more than four decades with undiminished curiosity, discipline, rigour, and a constant critical sense. In addition to having become an indispensable point of reference in the region, he is also an ethical reference for various generations of Central Americans. His academic career is closely linked with his personal life: he was a member of that generation that breathed the fresh airs of the Guatemalan Revolution of October 1944; he was active in the revolutionary government of Jacobo Arbenz, who was overthrown ten years later; he subsequently joined the ranks of the Guatemalan Labour Party; in Chile, he studied sociology as part of the fourth class of the Latin American School of Sociology (ELAS) of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO); his return to Guatemala was barred during the years of military rule, so he went to Costa Rica, where he contributed decisively to the institutionalization of sociological studies in the region; he was General Secretary of FLACSO and as of nearly twenty years ago he coordinates the National Human Development Reports of the UNDP. His academic output includes more than twenty books which, given his permanent interest in Central America, include topics as varied as its agrarian and socioeconomic structures, the dependent relationships of its countries, and its political crises, democracy, the political left, and youth. In 2010, the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), which brings together the principal experts and scholars from the United States, Canada, and other regions of the world who work on Latin America, awarded him the Kalman H. Silvert prize, one of the most prestigious in the world in the social sciences, in recognition for his scholarly contributions.

"I returned to Guatemala because of the WSP. I was living in Madrid and I was called to Geneva. There I met with Matthias Stiefel, who explained the project to me and I immediately took the decision to return. Eight days later I landed in Guatemala. That was in September 1996, when we started the preparations, and I was present at the signing of the peace accords. In January the first meetings were held," Edelberto explains to us when we talked about the project that brought him back to Guatemala.

What did a social scientist of your career and experience find in the Interpeace approach which convinced you to become involved in the project?

What we were involved with at that moment was a very precise project, very concise and detailed: examine, interview actors and bring together discussion groups, the causes of the internal armed conflict, and how, at the moment it was signed, it had been possible to secure peace successfully. What was planned at that moment was important but it was also feasible: if peace was being signed as an administrative, bureaucratic protocol, it was necessary also for peace to become permanent through other means. What interested me the most was the possibility of putting together a satisfactory explanation of why there had been a conflict and why it had ended in this manner. In that sense, when referring to causes one assumes a mechanical interaction of factors, as for example "poverty" but a society sunk in misery does not wake up demanding change. It does happen when there are intellectual and political minorities that try to comprehend the factors that produce inequality, the groups in power that apply violence, the difficulties in accessing education, etc. When attempting to understand reality and to change it, many groups assume commitments; it is at the moment when the decision is taken to change the social order that the masses intervene and revolution seems possible. Let me mention

«To avoid change and make the people accept their condition, the State and the dominant groups use violence. In Guatemala, the most important factor that mobilized the masses was violence»

one more factor, the most important: to avoid change and make the people accept their condition, the State and the dominant groups use violence. In Guatemala, the most important factor that mobilized the masses was violence.

And what conclusions did you reach?

We arrived at preliminary conclusions about the origins of the conflict, and we reached a series of recommendations by consensus – something quite outstanding at that moment – that were brought together in the documents of the project; they are of some value (see box). Here I must express self-criticism, because the documents were extremely useful in a practical sense but to observe their implementation was beyond the terms of reference of the project. I know of hundreds of documents of great analytical value that are lost to researchers who don't read them and other thousands of pages that "die" due to humidity or become food for mice.

Nearly twenty years later, what is the main contribution of WSP-Guatemala?

I think that the most important was that for the first time in Guatemala all of civil society came together, all the organization of the society, including the CACIF (the Coordinating Committee of Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and Financial Associations, the powerful business grouping that in Guatemala is the political and institutional expression of the private sector). The CACIF was involved continuously. In those days there was not so much visible resentment as there is today. Some military officers also were present. These were working groups that addressed different issues, each made up of 30 or 35 individuals that met every fifteen days during one year, without fail.

What was the environment that you found when you returned to Guatemala and in which the WSP developed?

A Guatemala with some groups that thought that with the end of the conflict a period of peace was beginning. What happened in 1997 was disappointing due to a lack of
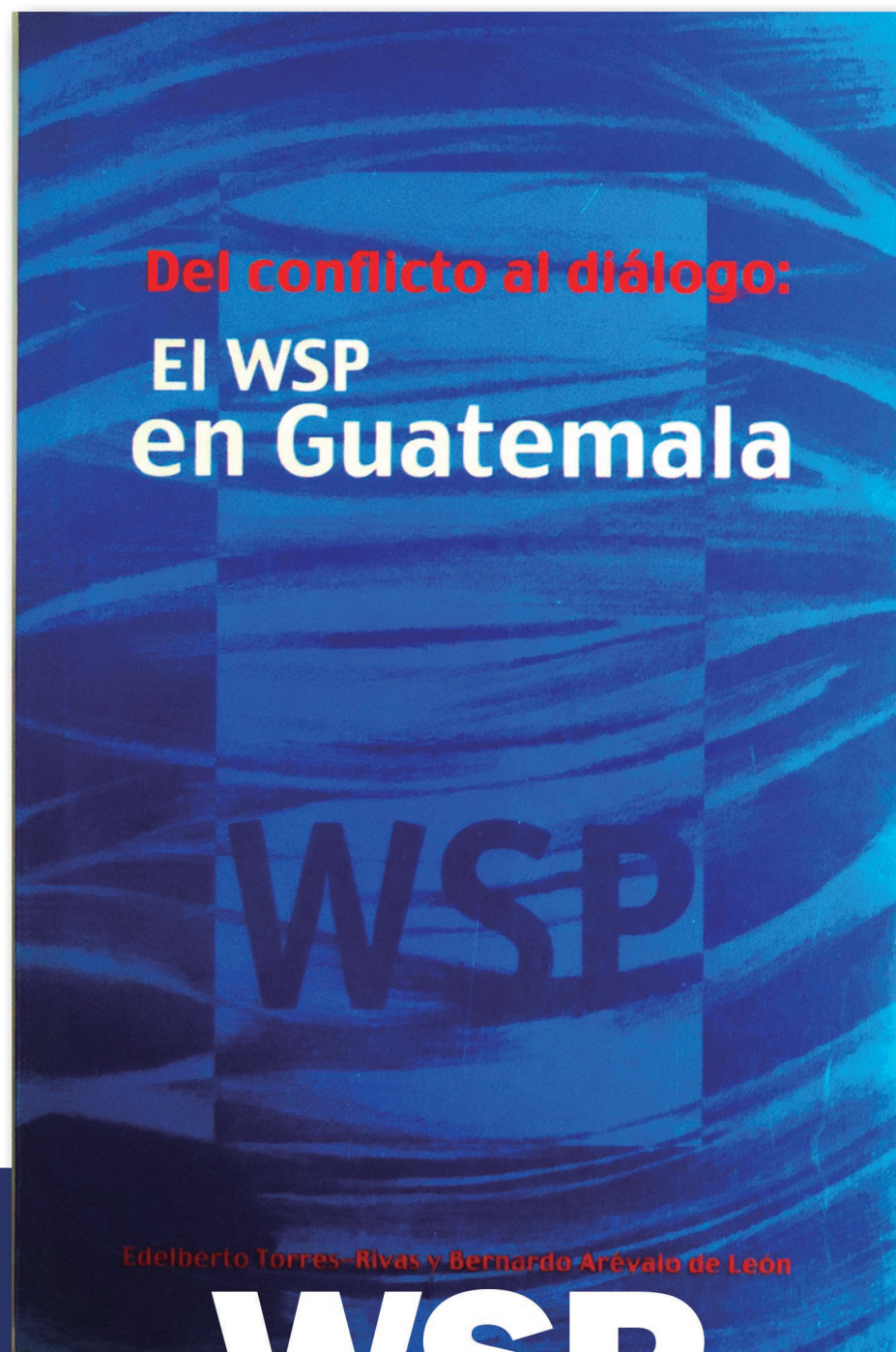
Del conflicto al diálogo:
El WSP en Guatemala
WSP
Edelberto Torres-Rivas y Bernardo Arévalo de León
WSP Guatemala

initiative on the part of President Arzú (1996-1999). The moment of the signing of the peace accords was the great opportunity to appeal to the Guatemalan nation and place before the political parties a programme of modernization and change. If Arzú had been a visionary politician he could have called on the Guatemalan nation to support a nation-building project, well presented and involving all the political forces. He did nothing of the sort. He wasn't even willing to personally receive the Report of the Commission of Historical Clarification of the United Nations (Guatemala: memoria del silencio). He boycotted the referendum to reform the Constitution and that opportunity was lost. How should I say? We imagined that Guatemala at that moment was going to come together under the direction of the President, a

prestigious man, who had won the elections and had directed the peace process. He would have had the support of the right and the left with a programme of reconciliation and national reordering. That was the great historic opportunity. These are the opportunities that Guatemala has lost. He did nothing. He divided the country even more when he began the privatization process. A year after having privatized telephone and electricity services, there were projects to privatize education. That's how the State began to shrink. It already was a weak State, in the sense of exercising little authority, and Arzú only reduced its size and presence. One only has to see the number of privileges he organized through the State's budget. It was he who revived trust funds; a trust fund is a concession, it is public monies that the State turns over to

be managed privately. Today 40% of public monies in Guatemala are administered by the private sector. It was within this environment that WSP was set up and functioned during 1997 and 1998.

What was the response of the actors who participated in the project, because we must assume that, upon the conclusion of the war, they had never before been part of such a large gathering with such a diversity of sectors?

It was highly valued as a first experience in bringing together diverse groups in support of a shared objective. The peace accords brought many people together. We had worked with them successfully since 1997. And I say successfully because there are the results, but putting them in practice was

not our responsibility, it was the government's task.

What is the environment today in contrast to that which you knew then?

The post-conflict environment is over. Now there are other issues on the political agenda, all of them revolving neurotically around the electoral event. Politics is as a fair, political parties are as bazaars, politicians are as circus actors. Part of the current oppressive climate can be found in the pernicious elements of brutal insecurity we are living in. Disorganized crime is worse than the organized version; young people living in slums as enemies of society represent a threat. A bit of information: in the first three months of this year there were 480 reports of extortions, which because of their frequency are also the most harmful.

What perceptions were there about peace at that moment? How did the actors who participated in the project think of peace?

That is a very complex question because society, in fact, is complex. It is important to mention that in contrast to the Salvadoran experience, the peace accords, the process of dialogue, the moment when they were agreed upon, held but little interest for the Guatemalan social sectors. The signing of the peace accords led to a great mass celebration in El Salvador, where some 100,000 citizens came together to celebrate with song, while here some 8,000 congregated in the plaza in front of the

National Palace. According to a survey commissioned by the Ebert Foundation, only 20% of the population had information about the peace accords.

Along this same line, when we talk about the construction of peace there is an immediate association with the idea of post-conflict societies. However, once we overcame that moment we realize now that we need to continue to build peace. In a context which is no longer a post-conflict one, what does the word peace bring to your mind today?

For people in the academic circle which I moved in, progressive people, peace was the observance of the Peace Accords and in that they were not mistaken. The Peace Accords include nearly all the aspects of State policy: the agrarian problem, the military, indigenous peoples, health, education. Thus, that was their response and it was a very difficult response at the same time: to say that peace is the observance of the Peace Accords, according to documents which cover all aspects of everything, is impossible. I never responded in those terms because, for me, the Peace Accords, well-written and carefully thought through as they are, were difficult to implement. Why? It is elementary: because none of the actors who signed the accords, not one of them, had the capacity to comply with them. The URNG that signed them was disorganized and the civilians from the three governments who signed the accords left their posts. Naturally, some things have been carried out

because they are within the logic of progress.

One of the questions we ask ourselves when talking about the construction of peace is: What is the common thread that can take us beyond the changes in contexts, if we assume that peace is a process and not a point of destination?

There is a common thread, since then and up to now. So that Guatemala can move forward, so that Guatemala can develop a little more, so that Guatemala can be democratic, it must have a strong democratic State. The idea of building a State runs through all our history, especially the history of the post-conflict period. But there are some more specific aspects upon which a peace policy can be supported: awareness of the horror of 150,000 dead; the issue of punishment followed by pardon and obliviousness about the past; the tasks of reconstruction and reconciliation, which are linked to the difficult problem of the incorporation of indigenous communities, and, of course, the struggle against inequalities as the foundation of peace, etc.

In other words, the answer you gave in that context about the meaning of peace is the same one that you would give today?

The same one.

But how can we talk about the construction of a strong State when it seems that we suffer

from a lack of citizenship in terms of policy in the public sector?

Maybe we shouldn't speak of citizenship but of a modern and efficient bureaucracy. What happens today is that, thanks to an awful civil service law, government employees are of low quality, toothless bureaucrats recruited after every election. That's why we call them chambones which is a colloquial term that means incompetent, inefficient. Every four years there is a "first generation" that arrives in the public administration to show off its ignorance, to learn the tips about pseudo-technical management when they have already been appointed to the post. And when they leave, the get severance pay… We talk of a strong State as a national centre of power that is obeyed seamlessly. To build it up is the most important task.

Shortly after peace was signed, and perhaps exceptionally, there was an interest in the public sector, but today it is the private interest which predominates over the public, to such an extent that it does not seem as necessary to understand the operation of the public administration to further one's "businesses". At the same time, we can see all through history that the public interest nearly always has been subordinated to private interests.

That's how fortunes have been made everywhere. The difference is that in other countries, as opposed to ours, the social commitment of the bourgeoisies never was forgotten. Within the logic of development, it was like that everywhere and that is how it started here: education is public. Where did they get the idea that it is private? And here it is private, nearly all of it; 80% of high school is in the hands of private education. And health, how can it be private? How can you put the healthcare of people up for sale? Health is a public concern, but here a majority of healthcare is private. These people don't know that one hundred years ago education in Latin America was public.

The very high levels of violence that Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras suffer are the product of the weakness of their States?

No, the germs of violence are in part an inheritance of the armed conflict and the repression by the Army, together with serious symptoms of impunity; also due to the poverty that afflicts the lower middle class, family disorganization, unemployment, and other facets of social ills. Violence is a result of the weakness of the State only insofar as its incapacity to guarantee the population the right to security. To the extent that the State does not guarantee that right, it is failing; violence is present everywhere and the State is unable to control it, especially since violence became a private issue: drug trafficking, organized crime in general.

At the same time, when the State represses, it is creating conditions for those repressed to answer back. For many years here, the population was beaten up in demonstrations, in protests; that began to change more or less when the armed option of revolution made its appearance, when people began to answer back and, finally, organized guerrilla groups. In a democratic State there is no violence. Violence is a response to violence by the State.

What issues that are central today appeared back then?

A number of them, but one that already was present then, as a central problem, was the issue of indigenous peoples. Since the Peace Accords, Guatemala has been become a multiethnic and multicultural society. The recognition of rights for the Maya population takes shape in various substantive changes, for example, the recognition of collective rights. The incorporation of indigenous peoples into society is not only a struggle against discrimination but also involves multilingual education, inequalities in education and work, etc.

It would seem that the Army is beyond political debate, at least formally, and that, quite the contrary, it makes great efforts to continue its structure of reforms: around 80% of the Army's personnel is made up of people who had nothing to do with the armed conflict. Nonetheless, it would seem to continue to play a fundamental role in this society.

The Army continues to be an important institution that should not be overlooked and that at this moment does not need to be activated. For what reason? Because the role that the military should play is that of defence against foreign threats. In the last years, the Army has been partially incorporated as reinforcement for the containment of violence, but has had no success in this task that places it face to face with citizens who have rights.

Finally, Edelberto, what should be the focus of an organization dedicated to the construction of peace, in the current regional context?

Peace in these times has two dimensions: the material reconstruction of society and robust economic development so that everyone can have a decent job. And national reconciliation, which must be preceded by punishment for the guilty. For example, punishment for the crime of genocide. In fact, there were thousands of people murdered, disappeared, and their relatives are still waiting to know why, when, and who was responsible… It is impossible to uncover everything but there are guilty parties like Ríos Montt and a dozen other generals who are directly responsible for the wrongs they inflicted on this poor society. At the same time, peace can be constructed if there is social development; everything that contributes to democracy, contributes to peace. Therefore, it is not necessary for me to say that the democratic State is peace; instead, it is those factors that contribute to its institutional operation. Education is good for peace. A healthy population is good for peace. Young people with jobs, mothers who do not die in childbirth…
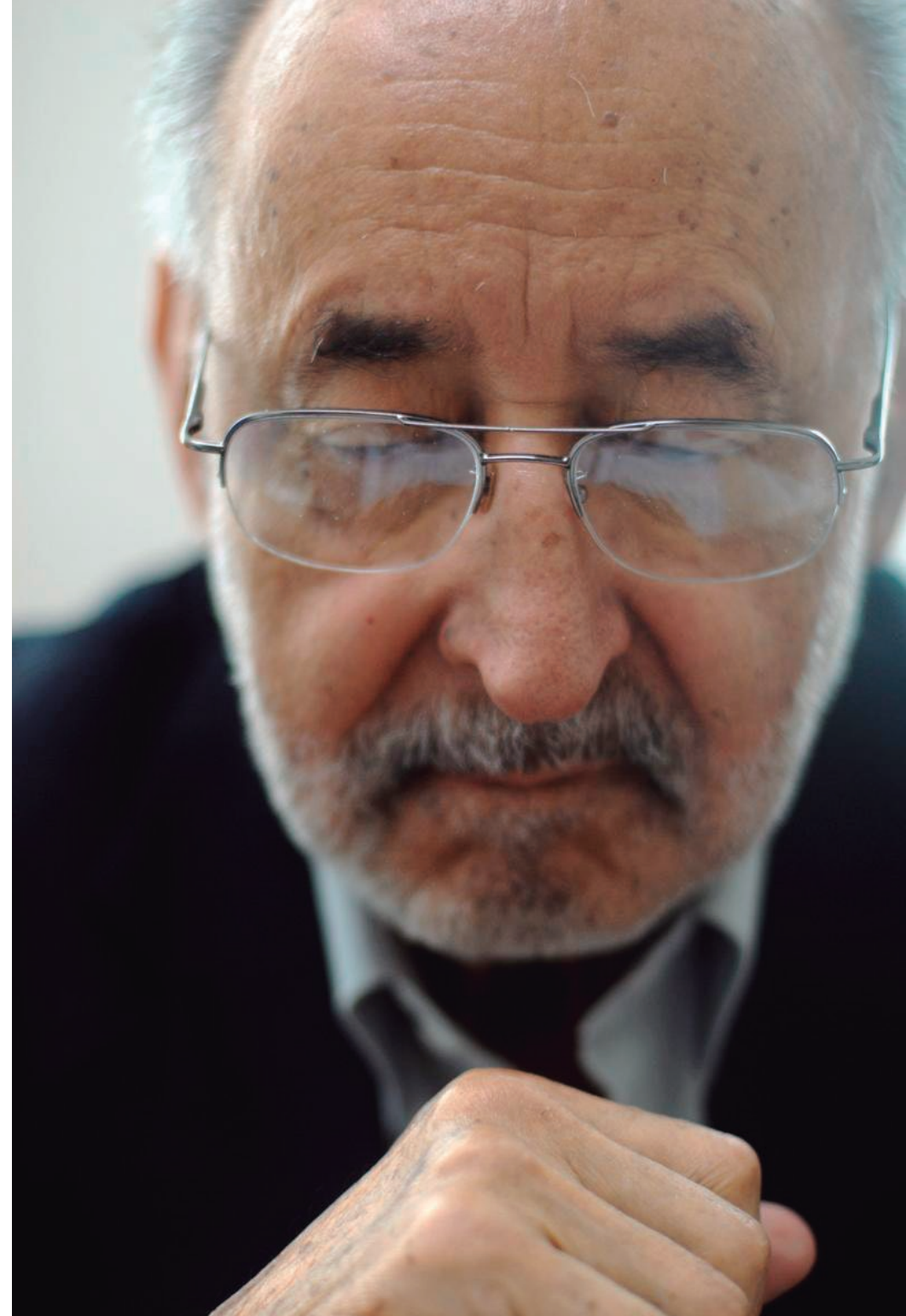
«Peace in these times has two dimensions: the material reconstruction of society and robust economic development so that everyone can have a decent job. And national reconciliation»

For peacebuilding the goal must be not just to enable a society to address specific drivers or root-causes of violent conflict, but rather to strengthen the elements of social and political cohesion that will allow it to prevent conflict from escalating into polarizing and violent dynamics, transforming it from a destructive to a constructive force.

Interpeace, Strategic Position Paper

20 YEARS OF BUILDING PEACE

FIFTEEN YEARS LATER

Reflexions on the experience of POLSEDE and its usefulness in the present

By Bernardo Arévalo de León

Fifteen years ago, when those of us who worked in the area of security studies at FLACSO identified the need to establish an inclusive and participatory dialogue concerning the challenges of security that Guatemala was facing, this was another country. Three years before, an end was finally put to the internal armed conflict that had bled us for more than three decades. The national agenda – those issues that people were focused on – still reflected what is technically known as the "post-conflict" moment: the debate concerning the conditions and the strategies that would allow our society to overcome definitively the cycle of violence and the causes that explain its origins.

One of the central issues of that agenda had to do with the transformation of the armed forces. The country was entering into a new era of peace with a military apparatus shaped by and for counterinsurgency violence. The perverse logic of the "internal enemy" – an inevitable conclusion given the inability to find peaceful solutions to political crises – had generated doctrines, strategies, structures, and mentalities that not only became unnecessary – there is no need for counterinsurgency when the insurgency is over – but dangerous. Within a democratic State, the army cannot turn its citizens into "enemies" and transform them into the objective of its military force.

The need to transform the military apparatus was beyond doubt. The new conditions the country was living in required a double transformation: from an army designed to fight a war to an army at the service of peace; from an army required to satisfy the needs for coercion by an authoritarian State to an army organized to serve a democracy. The Democratic Security Treaty Framework in Central America, signed by the Central American governments in 1995, had already identified this need by establishing a general set of values, principles, and objectives that should guide security policies and practices in the democratic societies that were beginning to appear in the region. The "Agreement to Strengthen Civil Authority and the Role of the Army in a Democratic Society", an integral part of the Peace Accords, had established concrete objectives

and parameters for our country. By building on these, progress could be made to identify the set of measures that would be needed to transform mindsets and implement security in the country, as well as setting down the legal and institutional framework for State management of security consistent with a democratic State under rule of law.

However, it soon became evident that this step, for which the necessary conditions had already been met, was encountering some obstacles. Some, those that had to do with resistance to change at the very core of the armed forces, were anticipated: every bureaucracy sticks by the certitudes of its origins and experience and does not sacrifice them voluntarily, especially when the paradigm implicit in this change carries with it a profound criticism of the images of itself and its role in society that this group holds. Less anticipated were those from other sectors. Within the Government, the disinterest about these matters by the majority of its officials – beginning with those in the highest positions – was reflected in their incapacity to take the initiative. The political class had no interest in getting involved in an issue that, according to its experience, offered very few benefits and many risks. Those in civil society who were conscious of the impor-

tance of the issue possessed few ideas that would enable them to move beyond complaints that for lack of proposals began to sound empty. And the polarized context that enveloped the issue made it impossible to broach it in a measured and reflexive manner. The peace signed on paper did not go so far as to influence attitudes and wills.

POLSEDE (Toward a Security Policy for Democracy) was born as an attempt to overcome these obstacles. Its purpose was to broach the issue of security in an inclusive and participatory forum in which actors from the State and society, civilians and soldiers, came together in a collaborative effort conceived not in zero sum terms ("if you win, I lose"), a characteristic of political negotiations which, in a polarized context, frequently deepen divisions. Conditions were sought that would allow this grouping of actors – diverse and frequently opposed – to initiate a process of plural reflexion that would lead to a different security policy: a shared conceptual framework, common objectives, and collaborative strategies.

Finally, after a patient process of explanation and persuasion, the process began with the participation of five government offices, sixteen academic institutions and

organizations of civil society, and ten individuals who were invited as experts. All of them – institutions, organizations, individuals -- were (and many still are) key players in the field of military security (see list). With the methodological support of WSP International – which had implemented a successful process of dialogue immediately after the signing of the Peace Accords – and within the framework of the United Nations Development Programme in Guatemala, a space was set apart in which military officers and civilians worked jointly in an unprecedented effort of study and dialogue. The effort speaks for itself: four years that involved

> «Four years that involved close to 200 individuals, eight plenary sessions, three international conferences, six technical working groups that each met around forty times, all under an ambitious agenda»

close to 200 individuals, eight plenary sessions, three international conferences, six technical working groups that each met around forty times, all under an ambitious agenda that encompassed a wide range of issues, from a new conceptual framework to regulate military responsibilities in a democracy to the operational and organizational details of intelligence gathering.

The process was complex and, on occasion, tortuous. A history of mutual hatreds and bitterness – in addition to three decades of war, more than 200,000 victims, the demonizing of the adversary – weighed heavily on the actors who, sometimes, were deeply split

List of
participants
POLSEDE

Government

Ministerio de la Defensa
Ministerio de Gobernación
Secretaria de la Paz (SEPAZ)
Secretaria de Análisis Estratégico (SAE)
Secretaria Administrativa y de Seguridad de la Presidencia (SAAS)

Academia and
Civil Society Organizations

Asociación de Investigación y Estudios Sociales (ASIES)
Asociación para el Avance de las Ciencias Sociales (AVANCSO)
Centro de Investigaciones Económicas Nacionales (CIEN)
Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO)
Fundación Myma Mack (FMM)
Instituto Centroamericano de Estudios Políticos (INCEP)
Instituto de Enseñanza para el Desarrollo Sostenible (IEPADES)
Instituto de Estudios Políticos, Económicos y Sociales (IPES)
Instituto de Relaciones Internacionales y de Investigación para la Paz (IRIPAZ)
Centro de Acción Legal para los Derechos Humanos (CALDH)
Seguridad en Democracia (SEDEM)
Instituto de Estudios Comparados en Ciencias Penales de Guatemala (ICCPG)
Centro de Estudios de Guatemala (CEG)
Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales, Universidad Rafael Landívar (URL)
Escuela de Ciencia Política, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala (USAC)
Centro de Estudios Urbanos y Rurales (CEUR), Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala (USAC)

Individual participants

Gen. Julio Balconi
Dr. Gabriel Aguilera Peralta
Lic. Guillermo Pacheco
Gen. Héctor Alejandro Gramajo
Tte. Cnel. Mauricio Lopez Bonilla
Cnel. Mario Mérida
Dr. Héctor Rosada Granados
Lic. Humberto Preti
Lic. Álvaro Pop
Gen. Otto Pérez Molina

between accepting the rational need to carry on with the work and their emotional resistance to accept and relate to "the other." But the use of a method that gradually built up confidence and allowed for a rational and balanced discussion of the issues, the respect for the rules of the game that assured an impartial process, and the will to leave behind a past full of violence allowed for consensus building around a series of topics, from those of a general nature – a text that analyzed the guidelines for military security in a democracy – to specific concerns – a draft of a law to regulate intelligence gathering in Guatemala. In the end, this collection of actors from diverse sectors of society and the State, who had participated in a history full of polarization and mistrust when not directly confronted in the line of battle, with diverse and opposed ideas on political and security matters, found a space to come together under common interests and objectives: twelve documents that reflect the outlines of this unusual meeting, that were condensed in four documents containing concrete recommendations in specific fields:

a. Conceptual foundations for taking military issues into consideration in the Guatemala of the 20th century.
b. Proposal for a reform of the security system.
c. Proposal for a reform of the intelligence system.
d. Proposal for a redefinition of the role of the military.

The scope of these agreements – the extent to which they influenced the process of transformation of the military and the construction of new institutional security frameworks – has varied. When the moment was right, the recommendations put forward fuelled and enriched a necessary public debate around the needs for security. Some of these documents set the ground for new exercises in dialogue and rapprochement, as was the case of the discussions about a new defence policy that the Ministry of Defence organized shortly afterwards with the participation of civil society. Others provided inputs for the preparation of institutional and legal reforms, such as the documents that dealt with intelligence matters which, in turn, assisted politicians and experts in

their reflexions on this complex and opaque set of problems. The effect was one of accretion: an external evaluation done nearly ten years later identified POLSEDE as the origin of a new security paradigm that gradually permeated the discourse and the thinking on this issue and that, added on to subsequent efforts, had come to influence sixty legislative bills in ten years.

But the most notable result was the change in attitudes that took place within the frame of the dialogue process and which allowed for the establishment of channels of communication among the radigm of democratic security.
• The establishment of the Programme to Strengthen Civil Society Capacities in Matters of Security (FOSS), which for more than six years assisted organizations of civil society to become technically knowledgeable about these issues.
• The establishment of opportunities for dialogue to create the Advisory Council on Security, within which the State and civil society agreed upon the terms that allowed for the implementation of this commitment of the AFPC (Agreement on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society)

Policy for the Ministry of Defence; of the agreement signed by organizations of civil society that specialized in these topics under the FOSS initiative with the Congress of the Republic to provide technical inputs for the corresponding legislative committees; and of the series of dialogue sessions that over the years have brought together State institutions and organizations of civil society to discuss matters related to security in the country. In contrast to other countries in the region, the channels of communication between State and society on these issues have remained open and the interaction continues regularly.

> «The most notable result was the change in attitudes that took place within the frame of the dialogue process and which allowed for the establishment of channels of communication among the participants that went beyond the scope of the project»

participants that went beyond the scope of the project. The positive experience of joint efforts, the concrete results evidenced in cooperation, the consensus forged around each issue that came together around a common platform, and the methods learned during this exercise conducive to a reflexive dialogue, allowed these actors to continue to interact constructively in diverse venues. Some of these were an extension of the project itself, initiatives adopted by the participants to provide continuity to the efforts that were being made within it:
• The creation of the Guatemala Network for Democratic Security that brought together military officers and civilians in a "security community" linked to the new pa-

• The Project in Support of a Citizen Security Policy (POLSEC), set up under the initiative of the participants in POLSEDE to transfer the analytical framework and dialogue mechanisms to the wider debate about public security and which during two years of work reached important conclusions and recommendations in this matter.

Others were initiatives adopted by the participants in the process of POLSEDE that, encouraged by the possibilities that dialogue had evidenced and empowered by the skills and the tools acquired within the process, were applied in other institutional environments. Such was the case of the process of dialogue to formulate a Defence

This does not mean that from then on everything went smoothly in matters of security and defence, and that all interaction between actors in society and State has been characterized by coordination and harmony. The work undertaken by POLSEDE – and its ramifications – made an important contribution, undoubtedly, to the effort to adapt the institutional framework for security in the country to the tasks of security in a democratic State. But this transformation is a process still incomplete in a number of aspects. A security crisis began to unfold at the influx of national and international factors that influenced a very rapid increase in violence, both in quantity and intensity, and created an environment of inse-

curity that affected and continues to affect Guatemalan society at all levels and over all its territory. Guatemalan society today is concerned and worried about a reality that takes on the form of: levels of violence comparable to those of war zones; forms of violence characterized by excessive cruelty and challenges that overwhelm the State's capacity to respond and that generate violent reactions from society, which only add to the problem. The need to address these situations – to respond to the demands of the affected population – and the short-term attitudes that unfortunately characterize the government's actions, began to distract attention from the efforts of institutional transformation which, had they been completed, would have improved noticeably the State's capacity to address the problem.

It is no longer a matter of a necessary transformation of a political and institutional agenda linked to the coun-

cooperation to address a problem which affects us all and which extends beyond the capacities that each of the actors in society and the State, independently, have at their disposal. It's not a matter, after all, of problems derived exclusively from post-conflict scenarios. The processes and tools that in Guatemala were tried within the framework of the process of dialogue after the signing of the Peace Accords – including POLSEDE and its offspring – are starting to be used in countries with stable and institutionalized democracies to address social problems that require collaboration between State and society – the implementation of concrete and coordinated actions by different actors working towards a common objective – that are beyond the bounds of their institutional frameworks. This is what is known as "collective impact" and is applied in countries such as the United States, for example, in the prevention of highway accidents or educational reforms.

Because violence and coercion are rooted in long-term historical dynamics that permeate a society's social and political life, we believe that the social and political processes necessary to transform the way a society functions take generations, and cannot be achieved through quick-fixes. Therefore, peacebuilding efforts have to be conceived as mid- to long-term strategies that work for cumulative and incremental impact.

Interpeace, Strategic Position Paper.

«The skills and attitudes that remained in individuals – and through them – in the institutions that participated in those years represent the capacities which are in place to build higher levels of collaboration and convergence»

try's democratization. After the signing of the Peace Accords, the agenda centred on a complex process of institutional transformation that – above and beyond being a political commitment that involved different aspects of the social and political life of the country – was indispensable to bring the institutional framework of the State into line with a new cycle in the political life of the country: that of democracy. Today the necessary transformations have to deal with the best use of institutional resources that the country possesses to allow the State to address, effectively and efficiently, the threats to the security of the lives and properties of its citizens, a fundamental condition for the consolidation of every democracy. These are different problems in a different country.
But history weighs on the present, and as every society is the product of its own experience, we continue to drag along some of the problems that required at that moment in time an extraordinary effort to enable a process of collective reflexion. We are still held back by mistrust, resentment, an absence of shared horizons, and technical doubts, all of which inhibit the necessary

What is new in these countries is not new for us. We already possess the conceptual and methodological tools required to develop an efforts of this type. We also have the capacities – technical, dialogue-related – in different areas of society and the State, among those individuals and institutions that, regardless of the problems they face, continue to believe in, and recur to, dialogue. That is the most important legacy of POLSEDE: the recommendations that were produced at that moment – at least some of them – might have lost their validity but the skills and attitudes that remained in individuals – and through them – in the institutions that participated in those years represent the capacities which are in place to build higher levels of collaboration and convergence. The country requires it. Maybe it's the time to put them to use.