

THE SOUTH AFRICAN FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION

A Short History - Continued

7.

FROM BLAXALL TO RECESS 1964 - 1973The Struggle to Survive

"Most of us went to Wilgespruit feeling depressed .. We came away ... feeling extremely hopeful." That's how the outgoing Secretary, Tony Cotton, described the SAFOR Conference, held at Wilgespruit Fellowship Centre on 14th and 15th December 1963, which tried to rebuild the movement after Dr. Blaxall's conviction and resignation.

Notes of the discussion showed how successfully Blaxall had re-directed the SAFOR's attention from international wars to South Africa's racially-based injustices - which had grown apace in the past decade. But as yet members still did not know what to do about it, except pray. No programme of action was in sight. Survival seemed more important. The organisation at that time counted 65 members and 37 associates, with another 40 names untraceable.

Of the dozen people present at Wilgespruit there was one new-comer, the Rev Denis Walker, a Methodist minister on the point of switching to commercial activity. He carried a Minute from the East London group nominating him as Hon Secretary, which seemed to solve the organisational problem. Mary Elder continued as Hon Treasurer from distant Pretoria and the meeting elected in absentia John Shingler - an Estate Agent and City Councillor of East London as Chairman and John Halliday of Johannesburg as a committee member. The present writer, then also in East London, was subsequently co-opted.

It did not last long. By the end of 1964 John Shingler had resigned and Denis Walker was in Rhodesia where he later emerged as Minister of Education in Ian Smith's UDI government. The Rev Rodney Baumeister, who took his place as Acting Secretary, had moved to Johannesburg.

When Arthur Blaxall's ship had passed through East London en route to the United Kingdom in February 1964 I had tackled him about his continuing on the Council of the IFOR in view of the problem this would create as we tried to re-establish the movement's pacifist credibility. He graciously resigned that position. I met him again in London in 1969, at 78 years of age still concerned about creating a better world, but I noted with regret his signature on a 1970 British Council of Churches study paper which stated: "There can be a just revolution (violence implied - RR) as well as a just war".

From a sense of loyalty to Arthur and all that he had been for the SAFOR I hesitantly agreed, at the request of the two remaining committee members and with the approval of the IFOR, to function as "Chairman-Organiser" until something more solid could be arranged. (What follows is therefore written in the first person.)

Some Activity

One effort made during Denis Walker's time was the publication of a brief leaflet advising churches of the inadequate provision in the Defence Act that would affect any conscientious objectors (CO's) in their ranks. We posted this leaflet to about 5000 ministers of various denominations. Three replies came back, two of them critical of our action!

But later, under the General Secretaryship of Bishop Bill Burnett, the SACC began to take up the CO cause. Church pleas led eventually to an amendment

of the Defence Act in 1971 which meant that Jehovah's Witnesses (the only ones then resisting call-up) would serve a once-only sentence instead of being repeatedly jailed.

At that time I was pioneering the first racially integrated congregation of the Presbyterian Church and was also Secretary of a committee negotiating union between three Presbyterian bodies in South Africa. I was able to give only one regular day per month to SAFOR work. It was a holding operation, waiting for an opportunity to get moving.

The quarterly News Letter was regularly produced and sent, in addition, to some 25 FORs in other countries. When travelling on church business or on holiday I visited groups in Cape Town and Johannesburg, but we largely lost touch with the Indian and African friends of Blaxall's time. They appear to have joined more because of his personal activity in other fields than for any great attraction that the FOR held for them.

Current Events

On the national scene the Minister of Defence was saying "In times of emergency there is only one place for every South African (white, of course) - behind the butt of a rifle." In September 1966 a national plan for the "compulsory call-up of all able-bodied young South African men" was announced in Parliament and a year later the new Minister of Defence, P W Botha, intimated the extension of military training to women volunteers.

On such issues some group members wrote persistently to the Press, as I also did. But it was mostly reactive; I myself was slowly finding my way from doctrinaire pacifism to nonviolent direct action and did not give much of a lead. Meanwhile the growth of grand apartheid survived the 1966 assassination of its chief architect, Dr H F Verwoerd.

The Rhodesian Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) that same year led to our small group in that country forming themselves into the Rhodesian Fellowship of Reconciliation to meet the challenge of the civil war precipitated by that declaration. One of their members, Richard Knottenbelt, a teacher, was later (1977) jailed for refusing military service.

Further away the 1968 "Spring of Prague" provided the world with one of its first modern demonstrations of the power of spontaneous, though untrained, nonviolence on a national scale against a ruthless oppressor. This backed up the claims of sociologist Gene Sharp for non-military national defence set out in his 1965 paper "The Political Equivalent of War - Civilian Defence".

Inside South Africa Mr Nana Sita of Pretoria, applying Gandhian satyagraha to resist the Group Areas Act, was jailed thrice (1962, 1963 & 1967). Other isolated cases of similar resistance followed, including Mr Mohammed S Bhana of Pagaevie, Johannesburg in 1967. They were eventually evicted from their homes, but had stirred consciences that later took action.

Under Pressure

These were the days when detention without trial was introduced and the security apparatus sat hard on many organisations.

In 1966 the American FOR supplied me with 1000 copies of a colour picture booklet on Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. I managed to distribute more than 700 to hundreds of individuals before it was banned. In addition to the Montgomery Story it briefly covered Gandhi's campaigns and then explained how to practise nonviolence. No one knows how many minds were influenced by it. (Black & white photos available for interested readers as R3 per copy)

That year the Rev André Trocmé, IFOR's Secretary for Europe, famed for giving refuge in his church to Jews during the Nazi occupation of France, was refused a visa to visit us and to travel through SA to conduct a Church seminar in Lesotho. In 1968 the Anglican Bishop of Damaraland, Robert Nise, and lone Dutch anti-apartheid demonstrator Appolonia Brusse of Johannesburg were deported. Both were members of our Fellowship. But the Government dared not prevent a visit by pacifist Pastor Martin Niemöller, a co-President of the World Council of Churches, in 1966. He asserted in public meetings that racism posed a greater threat to world peace than the East-West ideological conflict.

Those years saw the suspicious death of Albert Luthuli (1967) and the assassination of Martin Luther King (1968). In October 1969 I was given a speaking opportunity and good press coverage in the East London community's celebration of another assassinated nonviolence leader - Gandhi himself.

My mail and movements were under constant Security Police surveillance. They took advantage of the banning of the Defence and Aid Fund in 1966 to have seven men search my home for a full morning. Similar searches of his office had been experienced by Dr. Blaxall. In 1969 they brought a charge against me under the Suppression of Communism Act but withdrew it the day before the trial when it was clear that it could not succeed. Instead my passport was refused when it expired the next year.

Another Conference

By the end of 1968 we could count 44 members of whom 8 were black and 26 associate members of whom 6 were black. Despite this decline the Committee, which had not met since my appointment as Chairman-Organiser and consisted now only of Mary Elder and John Halliday both in the PWV area, agreed that we call another national Conference in Johannesburg where most members were concentrated. We met in St. Alban's Church, Ferreirastown in September 1970.

The day before the Conference (3rd September) the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism announced its first grants to various anti-racist organisations including the ANC and PAC. Leading South African churchmen hastened to disassociate themselves from this action and professed their support for non-violent solutions. Naïvely we thought that our opportunity had come.

"Though we did not discuss the (PCR) issue in detail," I wrote in the next News Letter, "it symbolised the fact that the SAFOR is no longer primarily concerned with conscientious objection in past World Wars or in a possible Third World War but rather with non-violent action for reconciliation in our local embryonic war situation."

Fred Moorhouse, prominent in British FOR and now representing the Rhodesian FOR, was present among the twenty participants, as also was Dr. Basil Moore, a Methodist minister soon to be banned and go into exile.

It was a lively meeting. It elected the Rev Cedric Mayson (then Joint Secretary of the Methodist Christian Citizenship Department) as the new Chairman and Vic Silversten, formerly our Hon Auditor, as Secretary/Treasurer. On the new committee were the Rev Jerry Letlabika, Mary Elder, John Halliday and myself as a corresponding member.

I returned to East London much relieved and with hope. But the new committee never met and the News Letter ceased, the new officials being so heavily committed to other priorities.

Of those times John Halliday writes: "It was a difficult transition from the concept that we should not use violence - in particular, arms - in defence of our own position, to realising that we had a continuation of injustice imposed upon our neighbours by ourselves through representatives. I remember

Clifford Weloh (minister of the Central Congregational Church, Johannesburg) working very hard to persuade his (white) congregation to come out with him to Soweto to see what was going on. The trouble was that what was going on was a formalised extension of a situation that had been in existence for the lifetime of his congregation and it was very difficult to get anyone to see it as something that needed attention. Those who were slowly realising the injustice of the situation felt themselves terribly isolated, lone voices with a task that seemed beyond them. Most others refused to see because to see would involve change that would be hard work and costly."

Into Recess

The 1963 Wilgespruit Conference had noted that the emergence of the Christian Institute (CI) was a measure of the failure of the SAFOR to do its 'reconciling' job among the churches and to touch the Afrikaner people. So in 1973 I suggested to the remnants of the committee that the honest thing to do was to go into recess in favour of the CI. It had elements of non-violence in its thinking and many of us were already in its membership. Cedric Mayson conducted a poll among members and all responses were in favour of this move.

By 1976 Cedric was Editor of the CI's monthly publication Pro Veritate, and I was pushed into the Chair of its National Council just before it was banned in October 1977. This banning meant that all our records, which had been lodged with the CI "for safe keeping", disappeared into the maw of the Security Police at John Vorster Square. Despite efforts on my part they were never recovered.

In those days we did not know what to do about bannings, deportations, visa and passport refusals and other administrative injustices, let alone the larger social wrongs. Ten years had rolled by and we had learned very little, done less, and in the end not survived.

Fortunately the International FOR had not forgotten South Africa and in the next decade we were to learn from their international experts that any injustice could be effectively overcome by persistent nonviolent direct action. Which at last was what the scattered remnant began to do.

Next Issue: The Role of the IFOR in South Africa's Struggle. (Part I, 1974-1983)

THE SOUTH AFRICAN FELLOWSHIP OF RECONCILIATION

A Short History - Continued

11.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL F.O.R. IN SOUTH AFRICA'S STRUGGLEPart I : 1974-1982The End of the Christian Institute

The Christian Institute (CI) was the contact organisation in South Africa after the SAFOR went into recess, but it was under severe pressure from the Government. First it was declared an "affected organisation" in May 1975 which meant that it could no longer legally receive funding from outside the country. Instead of hurting the CI, this actually threw it back on its own resources, engaged its staff more effectively with its membership and about doubled its financial support from within South Africa.

So when the next group of organisations was ripe for banning, following the death of Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko at the hands of the Security Police, the CI was included. It was the only one of the 18 organisations then banned which had any white members. Its General Secretary, Dr Beyers Naudé, was banned along with Cedric Mayson and five other whites prominent in liberation efforts. Its monthly publication Pro Veritate was also banned. That was the 19th of October 1977.

With just a month's experience as Chairman of the CI's National Council, I considered simply calling the next meeting of its Executive Committee due on 5th November and taking the consequences. I drew up an agenda on which the first major item of business was the banning of the CI and prepared to send a copy of this to the Security Police to obviate any suspicion of secrecy.

Then I consulted a sympathetic Senior Counsel. I was told that the Act under which I would be prosecuted now stipulated a mandatory sentence of one year (a maximum of ten), that judges were interpreting this to mean that the one year could not be suspended and that I would probably get two years. It would be a token action for which I would get anything but a token sentence.

It is one of the major regrets of my life that I funked it. With subsequent experience of court appearances, and of the caution lawyers exercise in respect of their clients, I realise that the imprisonment of a minister of the Presbyterian Church for such clear civil disobedience would have created a major dilemma for the State. They would have found a way to shorten or even eliminate the incarceration. Also imprisonment might have turned the tide against the whole banning process, the tide of national affairs having already turned on 16th June the previous year. As it was, we had to wait a decade for the defiance of banning to begin.

IFOR to the Rescue

With the CI gone, the IFOR asked me to be their "Contact Person" in South Africa, gave constant encouragement and proceeded to offer us, at their expense, the expertise of remarkable visitors from overseas.

The first was Uli Honos, the IFOR's staffperson with special responsibility for Africa. He paid two visits in the late 1970s and kept in touch with us over years as our efforts developed. In 1980 he distributed world wide 60,000 labels to which a key could be attached for posting to South African embassies. The label quoted Isaiah 42:7 "Bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness" and called for the release of people detained under security legislation.

"If you think something ought to be done, you should do it yourself," said Will Warren, an English Quaker, who was the next to be sponsored and sent by the IFOR. He arrived at Jan Smuts Airport in November 1978 on a one-way ticket with all his luggage in a rucksack. He was 72 and without medical assistance had just survived a heart attack - hence the one-way ticket!

Will had spent the six years since his retirement working almost solo in Londonderry, N. Ireland, and had a story to tell of remarkable interventions in that country's violent conflicts. (See "Will Warren - a Scrapbook" compiled by John Lazenby and published by Quaker Home Service, London 1983).

While sharing his experiences and understanding of nonviolence with groups in South Africa he had a further two heart attacks. As he lay recovering in the J.G. Strydom Hospital I was inspired by his commitment to move onto the pavement with the evicted Naidu family in an action that, in early 1979, turned the tide against the Group Areas Act (described in Non-Violence News, First Quarter 1994). Will returned to the United Kingdom but died within a year.

Dorothy Cotton, a close associate of Dr Martin Luther King in the US Civil Rights movement, was IFOR's next offer of help made in October 1979, to be sponsored also by the Roman Catholic Church. A visa refusal in February 1980 stopped her visit.

Dr Hildegard Goss-Mayr, then Travelling Secretary for the IFOR and its representative at the Vatican, probably had the greatest influence in promoting nonviolent action for liberation in South Africa.

She grew up in Austria, through the German occupation and the War, followed by ten years of Russian occupation. In the 1950s she pioneered East-West contact between Christians in Europe. In the 60s and 70s she and her husband Joan Goss worked throughout Latin America developing nonviolent actions and highly effective organisations among the poor to overcome injustice and exploitation.

In 1976 the "Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Rhodesia", on the initiative of Bishop Lamont, tried to set up for John and Hildegard an intensive training programme in active nonviolence as a contribution to the effort to obtain liberation by peaceful means. However the deal was not struck. The guerilla war that followed cost 25,000 lives and precipitated the exodus of 60% of the white population.

A humble and gentle person, her low profile enabled Hildegard to pay visits to South Africa in 1978 and 1980. She was hosted and supported by the Catholic Church of which she is part. With convincing illustrations from her experience in South America, particularly Brazil, she inspired church activists around the country and also gave us a model training programme for engaging in nonviolent direct action on almost any issue of injustice or violence (See "Notes for a Workshop on Active Nonviolence" obtainable from the IFOR, Alkmaar, Netherlands). Hildegard is now Honorary President of the IFOR.

Here and there people began to put her programme into action, such as people resisting squatter camp demolitions in Cape Town and a Johannesburg group of seven who landed in court for resisting the removal of Indian and Coloured people from Pageview in 1979. Slowly we were learning and acting.

And then Eric Buchman came from Germany in mid 1981. This young man's ~~qualifications~~ engaged with the growing revolt among high school pupils in disadvantaged communities. Some of these young people led later actions that helped towards comparatively peaceful transition in South Africa. Eric also gave us ideas and tools for planning and strategy in nonviolent social actions.

Engaging with our Struggle

All this input meshed helpfully with the developing struggle in our country. For example, in May 1978 a "Seminar on War and Peace" was organised in Cape Town involving among others Prof Paul Hare, co-author of "Nonviolent Direct Action" (Corpus Books 1968), Dr Allan Boesak, later to lead the United Democratic Front which initiated wide-scale non-violent resistance to apartheid, and Dr James Moulder who had an early influence on the Conscientious Objection movement.

Following the 1977 banning of the CI and the Black Consciousness organisations, the Programme to Combat Racism of the World Council of Churches put out a paper entitled "South Africa's Hope - What Price Now?" in which nonviolence was described as a failed policy which should be replaced with a theology of the "just revolution". The cautious response of the SACC was to set up a "Study Commission on Violence and Non-Violence".

By the end of 1978 I was convening this Commission and had a mandate to drop the argument about the relative morals and merits of violence and non-violence in favour of simply reporting and promoting instances of nonviolent direct action. From this arose the quarterly news letter Non-Violence News which is carrying this present history. It never had a wide circulation but did go to several persons who are now in the Government of the land.

The Convenership of this Commission gave me opportunity to touch the main centres of the country with seminars based on what Hildegard and Eric had taught us. It also put me in a position to co-ordinate the support of the churches for young men going to jail rather than serve in the SA Defence Force (That story appears in more detail in Non-Violence News, First Quarter 1994). Here again the IFOR was totally supportive, providing data on CO legislation round the world and news of emerging struggles in countries still at that time refusing recognition to COs (such as Switzerland, Spain and the then USSR.)

IFOR's publicity given to the imprisonment of objector Charles Yeats resulted in thousands of letters being sent to him, all of which had to be read by the officer in charge of the Detention Barracks. This officer paid a midnight visit to Yeats in his cell to tell him how deeply the letters had moved him.

IFOR's quarterly magazine, IFOR Report, also found its way to several key persons in the liberation movements. They may not have shared its total commitment to nonviolence, but could pick up ideas for effective action from its columns. Its issues of March 1978 and July 1979 were totally devoted to the South African situation, and those of October 1980, December 1985 and April 1988 were largely so devoted.

Changing the Basis

The original basis of the IFOR has already been referred to. The SAFOR basis read as follows:

The Fellowship of Reconciliation is a body of Christian people who, without binding themselves to an exact form of words, affirms:-

That Love, as revealed in the life and death of Jesus Christ, is the supreme power by which evil can be overcome, and the only sufficient basis for human society.

That, therefore, they find themselves unable to take part in any war but that loyalty to country, humanity, the Church Universal and to Jesus Christ, calls them to a life of service for the enthronement of Love in personal, social, commercial, national and international life.

The SAFOR enrolled as Associates those persons in sympathy with its aims who nevertheless could not make this affirmation. Several persons of Hindu belief were so associated and also some who did not see themselves as thorough-going pacifists.

By 1963 the American FOR had suggested that the specifically Christian basis should be widened to include other faiths. After years of discussion and consultation with national branches the IFOR Council decided that IFOR would in the future welcome not only Christians but pacifists of other religious traditions. National branches were still free to decide whether to retain the specifically Christian basis (as is the case, for example, with the English FOR), to adopt the inter-faith position or to constitute themselves on the basis of another specific belief.

The Jewish Peace Fellowship had already grown up within the FOR in the United States. The Vietnam War revealed how effective Buddhists were when committed to nonviolent action and a Buddhist Peace Fellowship was founded within the Fellowship of Reconciliation. It now exists in Australia, the USA, Asia and Europe. In Bangladesh the IFOR branch named Samprocti welcomes Moslems, Hindus and Christians. Several African groups include members of various faiths and a Muslim Peace Fellowship has recently been founded in the United States.

By 1977 the IFOR described itself as

a transnational religious community committed to nonviolence as a principle of life for a world community of peace and liberation. Our vision is rooted in the various traditions of faith from which we are drawn. We include Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Gandhians as well as those of non-traditional convictions.

The IFOR currently describes itself as

an international, spiritually-based movement of women and men committed to active nonviolence as a way of life and as a means of personal, social and political change.

A New Advance

Two of South Africa's early conscientious objectors were Baptists, Richard Steele and his cousin Peter Moll. Their patient resistance succeeded in changing the mind of the Chief of the SA Defence Force on the CO issue. When they came out of Detention Barracks early in 1981 I found money for them both to go overseas for some training and experience in nonviolence. Once there, their expenses were met and all arrangements made by the IFOR and its local branches.

Peter spent six months in Latin America, mostly in Brazil. Richard, after a spell with him in Brazil, went to the USA and Europe for an extended period of intense discovery and confirmation of the beliefs that had made him refuse to do military service. He returned to South Africa in 1983.

At this time I was minister of St. Antony's United Church in Pagoview, Johannesburg. Inspired by its Scriptural emphasis on nonviolence and the accompanying direct action of several of its members, Anita Kromberg, another of its number, began work as an IFOR staffperson in South Africa in February 1983. She was later joined by Richard Steele.

In a simple Quaker service in 1986 these two committed their lives to each other, to God and to the South African community. The rest of the story belongs to them.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL F.O.R. IN SOUTH AFRICA'S STRUGGLEPart II : 1983-1993

In putting together this short history no claim is made that the SAFOU, or the IFOR through its South African staff, represented anything like the whole of non-violent resistance to Apartheid. Many individuals, groups and political parties resorted to non-violent methods. Sometimes they did this on principle, in other cases out of necessity realizing that violence had no hope of success.

However, the final decade described here was the point at which the FOR's input over many years began to bear its most tangible fruit. Richard Steele and I have agreed that, since it is more recent history, this final section should consist simply of the report written by Anita and himself describing their work as IFOR staff through this decade.

To this Report, however, I would like to add two brief sections.

(1) In paragraph B.4 Richard and Anita have been characteristically modest.

Firstly, the "loophole" that lawyers found to achieve their release was based solidly on the character of these two people. The Internal Security Act, Section 29, provided for indefinite detention without trial where there was "reason to believe that those detained had committed, intended to commit or had information on the commission of acts of violence or terrorism."

Persons of high public integrity produced affidavits concerning the commitment of these two workers to nonviolence and peacemaking which convinced the Supreme Court that there were no reasonable grounds for so believing. Their release was ordered as a result of this.

Secondly, Anita and Richard were the 1991 recipients of the US-based Pfeffer Peace Prize. This is given annually to "persons or groups of any nation who have dedicated their energies and passions to building peace by nonviolent means. It includes an award of US \$ 2,500.

(2) Significant IFOR visitors to South Africa during this decade were Diana Francis, the IFOR President, in 1986, and Richard Deats and Walter Wink in 1988. Diana came on a private visit to consult with and encourage Richard and Anita.

Professor Walter Wink had visited South Africa in 1985 under the auspices of the Methodist Church and subsequently wrote Jesus' Third Way - The Relevance of Non-violence in South Africa Today. The first edition was printed in the USA and posted to 3000 individuals in South Africa and a subsequent edition was made by the Methodist Publishing House in Cape Town.

Richard and Anita arranged for Walter to return in 1988 to present a workshop on the subject of the book for leading church activists. Because he was refused a visa this was held in Lesotho. About 35 key people attended and went home to South Africa to spread his perceptions of how nonviolence could change our situation.

Walter was accompanied by the Rev Richard Deats who gave a first hand account of how half a million Filipinos trained in nonviolence had overthrown the Marcos regime with a loss of only 121 lives. Their training had been initiated largely by Richard himself and by Hildegard Goss-Mayr.

Both Wink and Deats were in the wings at the formation of the Standing for the Truth Campaign in May 1988 at which the churches and the SACC committed themselves to active nonviolent direct action for the ending of Apartheid.



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EXCERPTS: FINAL REPORT, THE IFOR SOUTH AFRICA PROJECT

Anita Kromberg and Richard Steele

1 February 1983 - 31 January 1993

A. OVERVIEW

1. History

The South African Fellowship of Reconciliation existed until 1977, when it collapsed after the banning of the Christian Institute (with which it was closely associated).

Rob Robertson, a Presbyterian minister, served as a contact person for IFOR from 1977 until the IFOR South African Project started in 1983.

Rob Robertson was a key figure in South Africa in promoting and supporting CO. In 1981 he helped arrange for conscientious objectors Peter Moll and Richard Steele to visit Brazil, Europe and North America under the auspices of the IFOR to study nonviolence and nonviolent action. They visited the IFOR secretariat in Alkmaar, Holland.

Anita Kromberg was a member of Rob Robertson's church and the Johannesburg CO Support Group. She went on holiday to Europe in 1981, and visited the IFOR Secretariat.

The Secretariat had a "South Africa Desk", staffed by Uli Henes, but when he left in 1981 the vacancy was not filled. During Anita's visit to the Secretariat she was offered this job, but chose not to take it because she did not want to leave South Africa. However, discussions over the next two years between the Secretariat, Anita and other interested people in South Africa resulted in the birth of the South Africa Project.

Anita's employment began on 1 February 1983, with a learning tour to Europe and the United States.

From 1 February 1983 to 31 October 1984 she was based in Johannesburg, working from home. In November 1984 the Project moved to an office in Durban, in the Ecumenical Centre.

Richard, closely associated with the Project from the start, joined the staff on a part-time basis on 1 January 1986 and on a full-time basis on 1 January 1987.

The IFOR office at the Ecumenical Centre was closed on 31 October 1992. The IFOR project ended formally on 31 January 1993.

2. Aims of the Project

- 2.1. To support existing peace and justice work, especially within the religious community.
- 2.2. To promote active nonviolence as a principle of life and as an effective strategy for social and political change.
- 2.3. To conduct seminars and workshops on nonviolence, nonviolent direct action, conflict handling and peace work in general.
- 2.4. To gather resources on peace, justice, nonviolence and related issues e.g. books, magazines, articles, posters, videos etc., and make these resources available for loan to interested groups and individuals.
- 2.5. To host international and other visitors.
- 2.6. To attend IFOR Council meetings and other conferences and educational events as appropriate.
- 2.7. To write articles and reports, keeping the local and international IFOR network informed of our activities and of our perspective on political developments in South Africa.
- 2.8. To administer the IFOR office in Durban.

3. Modus operandi

- 3.1. Our job title "Fieldworkers" expresses the priority of the job - promoting nonviolence in practice.
- 3.2. A primary operating principle was that the Project would resource existing groups rather than start another group. Main reasons for this were:
 - 3.2.1. When the Project began, understanding of, and sympathy for nonviolence was low. Forming a group of the few who felt comfortable with it would have isolated nonviolence - and those individuals - rather than promoted it.
 - 3.2.2. In accordance with the "salt" and "leaven" principle, we felt it was more important to resource activists in existing organisation than to draw them out into another group.
 - 3.2.3. We wanted to support already existing initiatives for justice and peace, encouraging them to grow in knowledge and skills of nonviolence.
 - 3.2.4. We felt we would be more acceptable as trainers if we were independent - there being no threat then that we would poach the members of other organisations.
- 3.3. We kept our roots as activists through being ordinary members of other groups, such as the End Conscription Campaign, the Conscientious Objector Support Group, the Conscription Advice Service, the Black Sash, and Diakonia (a Durban-based ecumenical church agency working on justice issues).
- 3.4. We did not set up workshops ourselves, but rather responded to invitations from existing or ad hoc groups. This way, we felt there would already be a clear interest and commitment to nonviolence, and the organisational ability to follow-up the training.
- 3.5. Our training style was experience based, participatory, and action oriented.

3.6. Administration:

- 3.6.1. We managed all planning, training and office administration ourselves.
- 3.6.2. Funding was from the Mennonite Central Committee (USA), New York Friends Group (USA), Dreikoningsaktion (Austria) and Quaker Peace and Service (UK). Funds were held on our behalf in an account with the FOR/USA. Money was sent to us as per request. Ten percent of funds raised for the Project were retained by the Secretariat for expenses there relating to our work.
- 3.6.3. We did not charge for workshops, but we did request that our travel costs be met if possible.
- 3.6.4. Working relationship with the Secretariat: our main staff contact was Francoise Pottier. We submitted reports to each Steering Committee meeting; attended International Councils; attended Steering Committee meetings if we happened to be in Europe at the appropriate time. Diana Francis (IFOR President at the time) visited us in 1986. In recent years, we had a monthly telephone call with Francoise. We received Steering Committee mailings in later years.
- 3.6.5. We attended the three IFOR-Africa regional meetings.
- 3.6.6. We had a local "reference group" in the early years, but this was not sustained. We continued to consult local supporters on an individual basis.

4. Brief description of seminars/workshops offered by us

- 4.1. Introduction to nonviolence and nonviolent action.
- 4.2. Preparation and training for nonviolent direct action.
- 4.3. Training of trainers - nonviolence and nonviolent action
- 4.4. Security training - preparation for police visits, arrest, detention.
- 4.5. The Bible and violence/nonviolence.
- 4.6. Militarism - how can we respond?
- 4.7. Counselling conscripts - information and skills.
- 4.8. Conscientious objection to the payment of taxes.
- 4.9. Civil Disobedience.
- 4.10. Creative conflict handling.
- 4.11. Fear, despair and empowerment - dealing with fear and other blockages which inhibit us from acting for social change.
- 4.12. Developing a strategy to move from concern to action.
- 4.13. Organisational skills training - developing creative and participatory methods of decision making, agenda planning, meeting facilitation, goal setting, evaluation etc..
- 4.14. Reconciliation and peacemaking.
- 4.15. Living nonviolently in a violent society.

Workshop length varied from one-and-a-half hours ^{to} 14 days.
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5. Groups we worked with

Groups we worked with included: local churches, religious orders, youth and student organisations, the End Conscription Campaign, the Black Sash, Conscientious Objector Support Groups, the South African Council of Churches, Standing for the Truth Campaign, Pietermaritzburg Agency for Christian Social Awareness, Diakonia, Africa Enterprise, National Initiative for Reconciliation, Quakers, Methodist Christian Youth and Education Department, Methodist Order of Peacemakers, Catholic Justice and Peace Committees, Anglican

Justice and Reconciliation Committees, Women for Peaceful Change Now, National Coalition of Women, World Conference on Religion and Peace, South African Association for Conflict Intervention, Empowering for Reconciliation with Justice.

The groups were mainly multi-racial, although we also worked with all-black or all-white groups.

6. General phases of our work

Our training work had three general emphases:

- 6.1. Nonviolent Direct Action training (including preparation for arrest and detention) - up to February 1990, when organisations such as the ANC and ECC were unbanned;
- 6.2. Creative Conflict Handling, February 1990 - February 1992;
- 6.3. Reconciliation and Peacemaking, February 1992 - January 1993.

In the beginning we found that we had to stick very closely to the pragmatic/strategic basis of nonviolence. Later, as nonviolent action became more common, and as the effects of violence became more evident, we were able to work on a deeper level regarding the moral and religious principles underlying nonviolent action.

B. REFLECTIONS

- 1. When the IFDR South Africa Project first started, it was unique in South Africa. There was no other organisation or institute offering nonviolence training, although various forms of organisational training were being offered. Nowadays, nonviolence training (including conflict handling, mediation and negotiation) is a major growth industry in South Africa. Peacemaking and peace promotion has even become institutionalised on a national level through the National Peace Accord, a national body set up by political parties, the government, the security forces, the churches and NGOs. The NPA is an umbrella body for Regional and Local Dispute Resolution Committees.
- 2. A major shift in consciousness regarding nonviolent action occurred in February 1988, when church leaders engaged in a march on parliament led by Archbishop Tutu and Dr Frank Chikane. This march was explicitly billed as a nonviolent protest, and took place in the midst of severe repression during the State of Emergency. In June that year the South African Council of Churches called an Emergency Convocation of Churches "to work on and develop effective nonviolent actions to pressurize the SA government to the negotiation table and for the Church to refuse to collaborate with the unjust system of apartheid". We were asked to run an NVDA workshop during that convocation. From then onwards, nonviolent action became much more acceptable. Walter Wink's book "Jesus Third Way" was circulating during this period (with assistance from FOR/USA and Rob Robertson who arranged for it to be sent to every clergyperson in churches belonging to the SACC). We believe this book made a significant contribution to this shift in consciousness. Walter Wink happened to be in the region at the time of the Convocation, so attended parts of it. He and Richard Deats led a workshop in Lesotho arranged by ourselves, the SACC, and the Transformation Resource Centre in Maseru, Lesotho.

3. We feel that the Aims listed in A2 above were accomplished. Our main achievements can be summarised as follows:
- 3.1. As activists we contributed a strong "nonviolence" analysis to the groups we were members of, thus influencing them in that direction;
 - 3.2. As trainers we were able to interact with many groups and individuals all over South Africa, encouraging them to grow in self-confidence and in the knowledge and skills of nonviolence. For instance, many of the 24 participants in the two-week training for trainers course we ran in May 1987 became key figures in the mass civil disobedience activities later that year, and are now leading figures in peace and reconciliation activities. We include in Appendix 1 an extract from the May 1986 newsletter of the Pretoria branch of the Black Sash which illustrates the manner in which our workshops were received.
 - 3.3. We were able to make a significant contribution to the campaign for an end to conscription and support for conscientious objectors. This campaign played a major role in undermining white support for apartheid and has sowed the seeds for the development of a broader "peace movement".
 - 3.4. On a material level, the IFOR book collection in the Ecumenical Resource Centre in Durban stands at 600 volumes. The collection specialises in nonviolence, peace education, women's issues and environmental issues. Although this collection remains the property of IFOR, we recommend that it remain in the Ecumenical Resource Centre where it will be managed on IFOR's behalf.
4. One of the most testing experiences of the last ten years was our detention by the police in Durban in October 1985. We were detained under Section 29 of the Internal Security Act which forbade access to family, lawyers or the courts. We were detained because of our anti-military and peace work. Human rights lawyers found a loophole in the Act, and the Supreme Court ordered our release after 10 days in detention.

C. MAJOR LEARNINGS

1. The importance of keeping one foot in activism and the other in training. This experience gave us considerable authority as trainers, and also kept us in touch with grassroots concerns and activism. Being members of local groups also gave us a sense of community and support.
2. The power of concentrating on challenging and conscientizing our own (white) community - a case of sweeping our own doorstep first. This enhanced our credibility in the black community.
3. We realised early on that entering into the debate on "violence v. non-violence" was counterproductive. We acknowledged the continuum of resistance, ranging from completely violent to absolutely nonviolent, and that all points on the continuum have a validity for those choosing them. We believe that people must act according to their conscience, and then take responsibility for their actions. It is not for us to condemn a genuine choice which is different from our own, although we feel we are entitled to make comments and raise questions about it, as we expect others to do of ours.

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21

Our training strategy was to move beyond the debate, and focus on attainable, effective action. Even at the height of the "armed struggle" period, the fact is that, de facto nonviolent (unarmed) actions (such as strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience and non-cooperation campaigns, conscientization programs) were by far the most common means of resistance in South Africa. We sought to draw attention to such resistance, and help people make it work better. We hoped too that people would then become interested in the dynamics of nonviolent action, and so want to learn about the classical principles etc. This did occur over the years.

D. FUTURE OF IFOR IN SOUTH AFRICA

The way the IFOR South Africa Project came into being, and the way it was structured was unique. It was a special creation for a particular period of South Africa's history. We, and many other South Africans, are grateful for IFOR's vision and generosity in fostering the Project. As explained more fully in correspondence with the IFOR secretariat regarding the termination of our employment and the closure of the South African office, we believe that the Project as originally conceived and set-up served its purpose. Any future IFOR presence in South African needs to be based in a local group which has local responsibility for management and fundraising.

We have held consultative meetings on the future of IFOR in South Africa in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban.

The participants in all three meetings were unanimous in favouring the establishment of FOR groups in the three centres, with a view to establishing a national body which would, in due course, apply for branch status or affiliate to IFOR in some way.

E. THANK YOU

We are very grateful for the excellent support we have received from IFOR Secretariat staff (especially Jim Forest, Françoise Pottier and David Atwood), Steering Committee members (especially Diana Francis and Akadim Chikandamina), FOR branches (especially the Austrian FOR and the US/FOR), Donna Felter of US/FOR who handled our international account, and our funders - Mennonite Central Committee (USA), New York Friends Group (USA), Dreikönigsaktion (Austria) and Quaker Peace and Service (UK). In South Africa, we especially thank Rob Robertson, Sheena Duncan, Joe Seremane and Paddy Kearney.

APPENDIX 1**EXTRACT FROM THE MAY 1986 NEWSLETTER OF THE PRETORIA BRANCH OF THE BLACK SASH**

"On Saturday 17 May 1986 some members of Sash and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission shared an invaluable experience when Richard Steele and Anita Kromberg of IFOR came from Durban to conduct a workshop on non-violent action. If non-violence appears to be an easy way out or a soft option, the 21 who attended the workshop discovered this was far from the truth. The open agenda allowed for flexibility of programme and consistent re-appraisal and discussion on the day's activities. As the group participated many things became apparent. People became better acquainted and established mutual trust. There was joint responsibility for the direction of the programme. Through participation in role-playing, one not only gained greater understanding of another person's point of view (often that of an opponent or an authority figure), but one also gained insights into one's own emotional responses. Many other things were learnt, such as the importance of listening to others and becoming aware of how they feel; accepting responsibility for change; being prepared before entering a conflict; assuming there is a solution to any problem; trying to find common ground with an opponent so that you may negotiate and try to get them on your side, but always leaving them a loop-hole for escape.

A basic principle is to stand on your own feet and build up your own strength; the only control you have is of yourself and if you rely on being rescued you will not have learnt how to cope and may land up in a similar position again. You need the support of others to build up group strength.

After the preparatory exercises of the morning, we looked at civil disobedience when one may disobey authority as a last resort in order to break power. Then we considered the concept of "apartheid", and in small groups worked on ways in which such concepts could be diminished. We started on the principle that the balance of an edifice is maintained by supporting pillars and if one or two supports are removed the structure collapses. So in order to topple such a structure, various pillars which maintain its support, such as the "Population Registration Act" or the "Group Areas Act" should be taken away. Each group narrowed their suggestions down to one pillar and concentrated on how that one might be gnawed away.

The groups came up with some original ideas - such as to flood the SABC-TV with phone calls when only one side of an argument was presented; to aim on getting right-wing whites to meet black people in congenial circumstances; for whites to travel on black buses and to stay overnight with friends in black townships.

The final evaluation of the day showed many positive aspects had emerged. Everyone had contributed and had wanted to do something. A group rapport had been established and many ideas were clarified. We are indeed grateful to Richard and Anita for sharing their time with us and helping us to formulate constructive ideas."