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*GRAPECA Groupe de Recherche et d'Action pour la paix en Ethiopie
et dans la Corne de l'Afrique*

SOME PROBLEMS OF TRANSITION

in

ETHIOPIA

Papers prepared by Ethiopian participants at the Paris conference
on Peace in Ethiopia, July 1991



Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement

The opinions in these papers are those of the authors and not necessarily those of CCFD, FPH or GRAPECA.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF PEACE

**Foundation for the
Progress of Mankind (FPH)**

**Catholic Committee against
Hunger and for Development (CCFD)**

**Research and Action Group
for peace in Ethiopia
and in the Horn of Africa (GRAPECA)**

For several years, the CCFD (Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development) and the FPH (Foundation for the Progress of Mankind) have been concerned with bringing their thoughts and their efforts together on the Construction of Peace.

Behind this common incentive is a common conviction: peace is not just the absence of war. Durable peace, meaning the desire of a large number of persons with different histories, interests and cultures to construct something together and to solve the inevitable conflicts, large and small, by pacific means, is the result of learning values and patiently constructing institutions, symbols and policies of all kinds.

Beyond the state of war, violence has very deep historical and cultural roots and in certain countries it constitutes an almost normal means of solving conflicts.

Where ethnic, economic and political contradictions have never been solved, it is possible to keep them from degenerating into civil war with a more or less police order, but there is a good chance that they will surface again, with more violence than ever, when maintenance of order lets up.

All in all, winning peace is much more difficult than winning war. And how many peoples have lost peace after winning a war ...

Weapons have stilled in Ethiopia. Provisionally or durably? The Ethiopians will have to construct peace after decades of violence. It will be a demanding task. Its success will depend on the capacity of all Ethiopians to overcome their many divisions and design the roads to reconciliation and development.

We asked ourselves how we could help the cause of peace in Ethiopia at this critical moment of its history. Certainly not by giving advice. But rather by helping Ethiopians from all tendencies think about the content of a "plan for peace", including the set of acts to be accomplished in the short or medium term to move from war to durable peace.

Situations are all different. Ethiopia is not like Afghanistan, nor Cambodia, nor Viet Nam, nor Nigeria, nor Germany, nor eastern Europe. But there is certainly much to be learned from the various historical experiences of successful or unsuccessful passages to peace.

This intuition led us to organize a five-day working seminar, from 15 to 19 July 1991 in the premises of the Foundation for the Progress of Mankind in Paris, open to all Ethiopian tendencies. It was set up as follows:

- ten working themes were retained, each corresponding to one aspect of a plan for peace.

- for each theme, the work went forward in two stages. The first stage, in the workshop, included presentations of what happened in various countries, made by persons having first hand information, but sufficiently removed to help provide a critical analysis of success and failure.

The second stage, in a plenary session reserved for Ethiopian participants, discussion on what was to be learned from these experiences in the Ethiopian case.

This dossier includes some of the papers presented by Ethiopian participants at the conference.

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WELCOMING SPEECH

Mr. Pierre CALAME, Foundation for the Progress of Mankind (FPH)

I am very pleased and moved to welcome you to this seminar which will discuss the conditions for a peace plan in Ethiopia. This seminar is something of a challenge. We accepted together with CCFD because peace is a major theme for our Foundation.

As opposed to war, peace is not a simple problem. On the contrary, it is a complex, fragile edifice that is hard to preserve. There are several examples to show that winning a war is often easier than winning peace. On the basis of this important central notion, we decided to organize a seminar where people can compare historical experiences on transition from war to peace or from dictatorship to democracy. The purpose is to let Ethiopians draw the lessons they feel appropriate and to work out the content of a peace plan for their country.

Our intention is to make our modest contribution towards the art of constructing peace, a necessity which is accepted by all today. The Foundation has not yet conducted an in-depth study with its partners in this field. We would not have taken the steps which led to this gathering had the events now unfolding in Ethiopia not

invited us to undertake the task. After all, at times we must be ready to set aside long-established programmes to seize the opportunity to start building peace when that moment comes.

We should also point out that our initiative was exceptionally well received from everyone approached. For that reason we were able to mobilize a tremendous reservoir of experience and intelligence in less than a month, to serve the cause of peace in Ethiopia. My thanks go to all those who take part in this seminar.

Three guiding principles have been followed in organizing this seminar. The first is rigorousness; to make the most of what we have, we tried to invite people who can speak concretely about a given historical situation as they were personally involved in these events. This is because the primary objective of the seminar is to make as much information and concrete facts as possible available to the Ethiopians.

The second is an open mind. We want to offer a forum for all tendencies and shades of opinion among participants both Ethiopian and others, since tolerance and the capacity of listening to what others have to say are essential ingredients in the construction of peace.

Finally, we were also guided by the desire not to intervene: Peace in Ethiopia is the responsibility of Ethiopians and Ethiopians alone. Nobody is qualified to tell them what to do.

These three guidelines are the basis of the working method we have adopted.

First we have tried to identify some crucial problems encountered in all peace processes. Ten topics have thus been selected for discussion. They will be discussed in two separate workshops which will meet every other day. We have decided to work alternatively in such a way that after each period of confrontation of different experiences, Ethiopian participants can meet and freely discuss the construction of peace in their country.

Allow me to conclude by saying that we were particularly moved by the reception our initiative has received abroad. The idea that everyone here holds a fragment of history has aroused enthusiasm and once again, I would like to express our gratitude to all those who by accepting our invitation have confirmed that the art of peace and the progress we have yet to make in this field is a crucial problem of our time. Thank you.

Mr. Jean-Claude ROUHAUD, Catholic Committee against Hunger and for Development (CCFD)

All the experience acquired through the work undertaken by CCFD has led us to the conviction that peace is a prerequisite for development. That, of course, is easy to say. But we now have a better understanding of the fragile nature and even the impossibility of development when conflicts and violence produce poverty which in

turn generates further violence. This vicious circle ends up disrupting the lives of men, women and children who then become refugees, hostages, or who "disappear". The construction of peace therefore becomes a prerequisite for development. In any case, this has become a priority in all the CCFD's undertakings.

If we examine the results obtained in the field of development during the last 30 years, we are obliged to ask ourselves some questions concerning the role played by NGOs, their method of analysis and of action. But even before answering these questions, we had already acquired a strong conviction: development requires a global approach. This implies that we must integrate our efforts within a wider network, choose the appropriate allies and work with partners.

The question is how can we pursue this effort when most of the projects we support - be they in rural or urban areas - are located in areas of violence which must be taken into account?

Of course we must first try to understand the reasons and nature of this violence. While in the sixties and seventies, conflicts were part of the global confrontation between the two blocks and as such had at least the advantage of simplicity, we clearly see today that such bipolarization only helped camouflage the very complex nature of these conflicts.

Since 1945, the third world has been the theatre of more than 120 conflicts which caused more deaths than the second world war. We also know today that this permanent state of war cannot be explained by ideological factors alone.

Violence is a multidimensional phenomenon and must be analysed as such if steps are to be taken towards constructing peace. Because of this, together with the FPH, we support research on violence in modern societies, as for example the work being done by CINEP in Columbia.

But our efforts must not be limited to analysing violence. We must also advertise the peace process going on today all over the world: in Latin America, Africa and Asia. We believe that the experience and know-how acquired by each person in the course of these processes must circulate widely, and be confronted and compared. This approach seems as appropriate and fruitful for peace as for development and progress. This is what we had in mind when we took part in organizing this seminar, believing that, just as CIEDEL considers itself an agency for "development engineering", we have invented the idea of "engineers of peace".