



Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs

No. 294 July - August 2007

Dealing with the Past - The Reality on the Ground

Photo: Goran Bozicevic, Miramida Centar



Pictured: Vjera Solar

In April, I participated in a seminar of some 40 peacebuilding activists in Brcko. I had been invited to this event by the two former and one current Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW - Britain Yearly Meeting of Quakers) representatives based in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia, who had arranged the seminar. As part of the process of devolution to local ownership and control, the first two are now directors of their own local NGOs TERCA and Miramida Centar - Centre for Regional Peacebuilding Exchange. QPSW's Dealing with the Past programme has supported the growth of authentic local initiatives towards truth and reconciliation since summer 2002. My brief was to be a resource person. I am convinced, several months on, that I learnt a lot more than I was able to contribute.

One of the people who participated in the seminar was a woman called Vjera Solar. I couldn't really talk to her on a one to one basis because we did not have a language in common but I noticed her immediately when I arrived and her face has stayed with me - a face of infinite sadness, infinite determination and, yes, also infinite patience.

Vjera Solar is known in Croatia - and maybe beyond - because she pursues her campaign for Truth and Justice with total focus. Her story is the real face of 'transitional justice'.

Vjera Solar is the mother of Ljubica Solar; Ljubica Solar was killed in Sisak, a town in Croatia in the summer of 1991, aged 19. She was killed because of her mixed ethnic background. Her mother is Croatian, her father a Serb. A tragedy repeated in different ways throughout Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, and Kosovo. But Vjera Solar is determined to find who was responsible for the killing and to bring them to justice.

Vjera Solar has formed a small NGO called 'Association of People Against Violence'. She has made contact with the families of 111 other people who were killed in and around Sisak. The investigations into their deaths, if they happened at all, were, as with the investigation into Ljubica Solar's murder, superficial and flawed; the result: no Court action is possible. But Vjera Solar does not give up. What she wants is the truth, just the truth.

The initial reaction of Croatian officials was denial; then there was an acknowledgement that there were 'individual crimes committed'. But Vjera Solar asks whether one can speak of individual crimes when 18 people are killed in one small town in the space of two hours in the early hours of the morning.

Vjera (the name means 'truth') Solar has contact with many others who are looking for the truth about the killing of their sons, daughters, fathers and mothers. And her work, her determination to carry on, her persistence is what gives them hope.

She has support, from local people, who tell her quietly that they are behind her - even if they don't say so publicly; from the Quaker representatives who work in Croatia; from other peace activists - many of whom were at the seminar in Brcko. There was a sense of great respect for her which even came across with the language barrier.

What makes her work so important is the fact that she keeps going. As long as those in power
(See page 2)

In this Issue:

Showing the Red Light to Traffic Page 2

Restorative Justice: How it Works - Page 3
A Book Review

Women in Prison Hearing in the Page 3
European Parliament



continue to obstruct the process of proper legal action to bring those responsible for the killings to book, Vjera Solar's work continues to be necessary.

Croatia is the most advanced candidate country in the region and it will be important for the EU and the Croatian government to ensure that the past is handled appropriately and openly in the process of accession to EU membership. If it is not possible to develop regional integration before accession and therefore see the countries of the Western Balkans accede piecemeal to the EU, then the least that must be ensured is that the past is not allowed to be forgotten and that impunity does not mar the future.

Martina Weitsch

Showing the Red Light to Traffic

Historically, Quakers have played an important role in the abolition of the slave trade and, more recently, Quakers are continuing the fight against modern slavery: the trafficking of human beings. Human trafficking is the third most significant crime to affect the global economy, generating around 10.5 billion euros in profits. Many people associate human trafficking with sexual exploitation but the sad truth is that there are many different kinds of trading in human life. It also includes domestic servitude, forced labour, trafficking in children and the organ trade. On average, a kidney on the black market could cost around 10,500 euros, and the price of a sex worker averages at about 4,500 euros. Some victims have reportedly been sold for as little as 700 euros (around 475 pounds sterling).

At a conference organised by the UK Human Trafficking Centre and Yorkshire Forward, it was agreed that one of the gravest problems facing Europe in terms of human trafficking is public perception. Firstly, there is little public awareness at all. Secondly, what little awareness there is of the trade in humans is usually false. There is a common misconception that if you have been 'caught up' in human trafficking, it is probably your own fault! Prostitution and trafficked sex workers are regularly confused. Thirdly, there is a growing trend amongst young European men that paying for sex is a socially acceptable practice, particularly when in a country where prostitution is legal. Thus it is a very real danger that the demand side of the sex trade is increasing in Europe but without an accompanying knowledge of human trafficking. The current media campaign of the UK Human Trafficking Centre is targeted at such young men to increase their awareness of exactly what they could be involved in when paying for sex.

Human trafficking is big business but very well hidden. As such, it is also a low-risk crime. It is difficult to catch offenders and even more difficult to prosecute them, as their victims are often too scared to testify in court. Although the EU is not in a position to prosecute individual offenders, as that is a national matter, universal legislation is emerging to tackle the problem with one European voice. However, with the expansion of the EU, it is difficult to predict how the scale and/or nature of human trafficking will change. Since the expansion, it is increasingly difficult to identify potential victims because persons trafficked within the EU no longer need a residence permit, whereas before they might have done. The free movement of persons, the ease with which EU citizens can travel from one country to the next, the multicultural and multilingual environment in which we now live may all be things which we value about Europe, but they are also making it much more difficult to control the traffic in human beings.

At the Council of Europe, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is appealing to all European cities and regions to sign up online to a Declaration on the fight against trafficking in human beings. See www.coe.int/t/congress/stoptrafficking/default_en.asp for further information. Of the seven member states who have so far ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, only 4 are EU Member States -Austria, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, (the other 3 are Albania, Georgia and Moldova). This is a dismal record. (Moldova was the first Council of Europe member state to ratify the Convention in May 2006.) To enter into force the Convention needs 10 ratifications from at least 8 member states. (The Convention is also open to signature from non- member states of the Council of Europe.) If your government has not yet ratified (or even signed) the Convention (see www.conventions.coe.int), please write to your member of parliament and to the relevant ministry asking them to put pressure on your government to ratify (or sign and then ratify) the Convention. If you are able to do this, please let us know whom you have written to and what answer you got.

Sarah Barnett

3 **Restorative Justice: How it Works - A Book Review**



Marian Liebmann, already well known in the field of restorative justice (RJ), here surveys modern RJ, from its origins in Canada more than 30 years ago up to 2007. Her experience in teaching, victim support, mediation and RJ itself enables her to give this broad overview, including not only the criminal law sense of the phrase but also restorative processes or practices in many other contexts.

There are chapters on principles and history, models of RJ, its application in early years, schools and the criminal justice system, and RJ in countries around the world. The final chapters deal with complex and sensitive cases, issues, research, large scale violence and oppression and arts approaches. Illustrating the processes and overarching principles are over two hundred varied case studies which show 'How it works' or, in just a few instances, when it does not work.

Crime affects the victim and the offender, their families and the community. RJ firstly attempts to put things right for the victim: supporting, explaining, healing. Secondly, offenders should take responsibility for what they have done, make reparation and seek to avoid future offending. Thirdly, the community plays a part in re-integrating the offender and, indeed, the victim, who may feel alienated as a result of crime. Marion describes how trained people can help towards these ends, working with offenders or victims separately and, if appropriate, together, enabling each to understand the other through victim-offender mediation. Such mediation differs from that employed in disputes or arguments, in that it recognizes from the outset that one party has been wronged by the other, but the objectives of seeing and responding to another's point of view are similar.

Similar restorative strategies can be applied to conflicts in families, playgroups and schools. Even pre-school children can benefit from them: some case studies illustrate how.

In schools an ethos of understanding, respect and acceptance are important in preventing or remedying disruption, conflict, bullying and crime. Similar principles can be seen to underlie RJ with victims and young offenders in the UK.

Of two chapters on RJ in prison, one is devoted to prisoners making amends, the other to improving relationships between those in the prison.

The research shows that RJ nearly always reduces the frequency and seriousness of reoffending and helps victims to get on with their lives. RJ is even cost-effective.

Examples of restorative methods after large-scale violence or oppression include the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, world-renowned for having "helped to avoid the predicted 'bloodbath'" after the ending of apartheid. Less well-known is the *Gacaca* jurisdiction set up to deal with many thousands of participants in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Other examples Marian presents are from East Timor, Latin America, Northern Ireland and the Balkans.

The book does not purport to show the alternative: where are we without restorative justice? RJ is generally seen as an alternative to 'traditional' punishments such as fining and imprisonment – but how traditional are these? As Marian reminds us, '... restorative justice ... is ... the most ancient and prevalent approach in the world to resolve harm and conflict.'

What people want might be summarized as fewer and less severe crimes, mending the harm and rehabilitating offenders. Imprisonment does little to address these issues and can exacerbate problems. Restorative justice practices – including restorative approaches to conflict and wrong-doing in early life – have great promise. The author ends optimistically, observing that today the term 'restorative justice' is widely understood: 'When a concept has entered everyday language, there is a good chance that it is here to stay.' This book impressively fills in the outlines of this concept.

Restorative Justice: How it works by Marian Liebmann.
London & Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley 2007. ISBN 978-1-84310-074-4

Tom Heydeman
Member of QCEA British Committee

Women in Prison Hearing in the European Parliament

An issue of concern for many Friends remains the treatment faced by women when they are sent to prison. Since 2004, Quaker Peace and Social Witness (QPSW), the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva (QUNO-Geneva), the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA), and the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) representatives to the United Nations Commission on Criminal Justice and Crime Prevention have been engaged in a project examining the issues surrounding the incarceration of women.

(See page 4)



Treating all prisoners the same does not mean treating them equally. Women have different physical and psychological needs to men. Due to their small numbers, women prisoners' education opportunities are often limited, and they are kept further from their homes and families. Most women in prison across the world are the primary carer for at least one child.

On 26 June 2007, the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee, a committee of the European Parliament, conducted a public hearing in Brussels to examine the situation of women in prison and the impact of imprisonment of parents on social and family rights. Here, MEPs and experts spoke of their concerns. Liz Scurfield from QCEA, was invited to address the Committee following the publication of QCEA's report examining the situation of women in prison in member states of the Council of Europe. She spoke of the need for member states to record the number, age, and location of prisoners' children upon arrival; of the needs of foreign national prisoners whose children may be in another country; and of the need for prison sentences to be given as a last resort, especially when an innocent dependant will suffer disruption and emotional distress.

QCEA looks forward to the completion of the parliamentary report on the issue, which is scheduled for November this year. Prison is not the right place for damaged and disadvantaged women who pose no risk to the public. Hopefully, this hearing will contribute to more effective and appropriate responses from governments in the years to come.

Quaker publications on women in prison are online now, available at www.quaker.org/qcea and www.quno.org

Matt Loffman

Subscriptions, Associate and Supporting Membership

Renewal date:

Please check month/year printed on address label.

Cost per year:

- **Around Europe:** post - £16/22 euros (25 euros outside Europe). e-mail - £10/15 euros (please ask for more details)
- **Associate Membership** (includes **Around Europe**, Annual Report, other publications and invitations to conferences) : £32/40 euros (45 euros outside Europe).
- **Supporting Membership:** 95 euros/£65 (please ask for more details)

Payment (receipts will only be issued if requested):

Europe (except Nederland and UK): in euros, to IBAN: BE68 0001 4998 4834, BIC: BPOTBEB1, or by credit card (quote number, name, expiry date, address; we acknowledge; you are billed in your home currency. Recommended method for those outside Europe.)

Nederland: via de Vereniging Vrienden v.d. Quakerraad voor Europese Aangelegenheden: Giro 2538685 VVQREA Helmond.

UK: by cheque payable to 'QCEA British Committee' sent to Marilyn Miles, Roseleigh, Northfield Road, Nailsworth, GL6 0NB, Glos., UK.

Rest of World: credit card (quote number, name, expiry date, address; we acknowledge; you are billed in your home currency.)



Around Europe

Quaker Council for European Affairs aisbl
Square Ambiorix 50, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium

Editeur responsable : Elizabeth Scurfield

www.quaker.org/qcea - info@qcea.org

Périodique mensuel. Bureau de dépôt : Bruxelles X

Belgique-België
P.P.-P.B.
Bruxelles X
BC 8843