

“The conflict between Serbians and Albanians on the Kosov@ (1) issue and the activities of the ‘Campaign for a Nonviolent Solution’ in order to prevent the explosion of the struggle, and to find a just solution”
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1) Foreword

If we compare the human and economic resources spent for war, with those used for the prevention of war and of armed conflicts, and if data on this issue could be found, we would be struck by the huge unbalance in favour of the former.

If we look at the activities of our own nations, the unbalance is even larger. Most of their efforts are put into manufacturing arms, selling them, preparing military corps, training them, and, and finally sending them into conflicts and wars. Moreover, if we analyse the activities of governments in preventing war we can say, without much doubt, that they have given much more effort and worked harder to create conflicts (selling arms to both sides of the conflict, or using one of them for their interests, or helping corrupted rulers in order to exploit one or both belligerents for their own economic interest, ecc. ecc.), than to prevent them. Concrete examples of this behaviour can be found, for example, in the recent conflicts in Iraq, Somalia, Yugoslavia, and lately in Albania. The United Nations have tried to rebalance this situation by putting much emphasis on peace-making and peace-keeping, but we could see the difficulties they had to carry on this type of work due to a lack of money and personnel, in comparison with the profusions of resources given when governments rather than the U.N. intervened (as it happened in these wars) (2). This reminds what a well known Italian scholar of international organizations had to say about peace keeping in Middle East. He asserted that the two conflicting large powers (at that moment Russia and Usa) had agreed on a common policy to not let the conflict between two opposing countries in the area (during that period, Syria and Israel) sink to a level on which they would not need arms from their respective partner, while, at the same time, not allowing the conflict to grow escalate and threaten World War III (3). Therefore, based on this, we can say that the politics of the larger powers has not been that of preventing conflicts, but of controlling them.

This and others studies have shown that there was no connection between the intensity and dangerousness of a conflict and the request by powerful nations for U. N. interventions, but rather this was connected to the lack of economic or political interest for a direct intervention (4)

Conflict prevention is rather carried out by Non-Governmental Organizations or Churches. The case of Kosov@ (Jugoslavia) is a good example. In this case the only groups which are actually working, searching for, or offering proposals, for a non-violent solution of the conflict are private Foundations or Non-Governmental Organizations (5). In fact, the organization that has succeeded in convincing both the Serbian and Kossovlar leadership to sign an initial agreement regarding schools

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is a religious community in Rome, the “Comunità di Sant’ Egidio” (6).

2) Prevention of conflicts and the search for a rightful solution

Just a few words about our concept of the prevention of conflicts. We must take into consideration the difference between conflict prevention and pacification. Commonly, the term “peace” is used to mean the lack of war and open conflict. In that sense we speak of “pacification”

as the work of smoothing conflicts, just trying to avoid the explosion of them. But this is not our conception. Many times the work of “pacification” results in conflicts that are kept latent or hidden, and they are not at all solved (7). Our conception is completely different. We think that conflicts should be helped to come out into the open, so they are visible, and can be studied in order to understand the causes behind them, and we must try to look for possible solutions, so we can solve conflicts through non-violence, and not just smooth them over (8). But this brings me to say some words about the work of mediation and negotiation with special reference to the Kosov@ issue, where there is an unbalanced conflict, as Serbia keeps about 95.000 well-armed soldiers and police men (9), and up to now, the Albanian side has responded through non-violence. The conflict theory says that mediation, and negotiation, in an unbalanced conflict always works in the interests of the most powerful (10). Therefore, in such situation it is necessary first of all to work to re-balance the conflict. This is possible in two ways: a) if the weaker part, i.e. the Albanians, overcome their disagreements and find a common strategy; b) if the International Community become fully aware of the problems involved and the high risks of a break-down of the area, and exerts pressure on the powerful part (Serbian) to restore the Constitutional rights of Kosov@, as recognized by the ‘74 Constitution, and which were eliminated through force and fraud in 1989, and to start a real and balanced dialogue between the two parts with a strong and well informed mediator.

To help to find a right solution, and to try to avoid the breakout of an armed conflict, we have been working at both these levels. But more so at the second one.

In the first level we realise that the experience of Kosov@ is one of the most advanced cases, in the world, for the use by the Albanian population of the technique of parallel government (11). So that we have much more to learn than to teach. Nevertheless we were struck by the strong divisions between the two lines in nonviolence brought on by our Albanian interlocutors. These lines could be called: 1) direct action; 2) constructive work. This division is not unique for Kosov@, on the contrary is quite common. It happened in India, after the Gandhi’s death, between his followers and disciples (Vinoba and J.P. Narayan). And it can be seen also in Italy between the lines of the two more traditional nonviolent movements, MN (Nonviolent Movement), more fond of direct action, and MIR (International Movement for Reconciliation), more involved in constructive work. In Kosov@ the leading party, LDK (Democratic League of Kosova), is mostly involved in constructive work (the construction of an alternative government, state, and parallel systems in schools, health, etc.). But it did not participate directly to many important symbolic actions of public protest (as the funeral of violence, or the rumors from the balconies to protest against the curfew). On the contrary the second political regroupement of Kosova, the Parliamentary Party, is fond of direct action, and it has directly organized many of these happenings; but it seems to underestimate the value and the strength of “constructive work”. So every time there was a request on this subject of our Albanian interlocutors, both in separate that in common meetings, we tried to explain that from our experience (both in Italy and in India (12)) the two lines could not be divided, and that both dimensions are essential to the nonviolent struggle (13). We also proposed to the Cultural Commission of the European Parliament, on the suggestion of a well known student of nonviolent battles of Albanians in Kosov@, S. Maliqi, the organization of an International Conference to which invite some of the best well known experts on this subject, in which the kosovar experience could be compared to that of other countries, and with the theory of nonviolence. But it does seem we have not presented this project in the right way.

But our main work has been on the second level, trying to convince Italy and Europe, to work for the rebalancing of the conflict from the exterior. In this level we have worked to make the conflict in Kosov@ known to the Italian public and to our politicians (we will speak, in the next paragraph, of this work), and we have, as Italian Secretariat for Nonviolent Popular Defence (DPN), participated in the works of the “Greens” at the European Parliament, to implement the idea of Alex Langer of promoting the organization of the “European Civil Peace Corps”, with the aim of having

a nucleus of well trained peoples to intervene in conflicts before their explosion, to prevent it and to find a rightful and peaceful solution. In the year 1996, in the meeting in Schlaining dedicated to implement the idea of European Civil Peace Corps (ECPC) the Italian Secretariat for Nonviolent Popular Defense, in behalf of the entire Campaign, proposed to use this "task force", as soon as will be a reality, for addressing the situation in Kosovo (14). We will dedicate the last paragraph of this paper to this proposal seen in the framework of the activities of mediation and offering proposals for the nonviolent resolution of the conflict, done not only by our organization but also by others.

But these two kinds of work alone cannot help in solving the conflict unless a third type of work is carried on, i.e., the help to pass from conflict to confrontation and dialogue from the two parts in conflict. This has been the third directive of our work, trying to break the "wall to wall" we did find in the area, trying to re-establish direct or indirect communication between the two parts (through twinning of schools and universities and common research), through the use of language and culture for overcoming the divisions and understanding the differences, and not as a way to promote the national individuality (see the project of an "European Cultural Center" in the annexe); and lately through the help to what a french volunteer has called the "hotbeds of peace", i.e. organizations that had refused the ethnic cleansing and in which the different ethnic groups are still working together.

3) Reasons and modalities of work of the "Campaigning for a Nonviolent Solution of the problem of Kosovo" (CSNK)" (15)

A scholars of international relations and conflict resolution has proposed that to start a politics of prevention it is necessary to "adopt a conflict", i.e. to study it deeply, to analyse the causes and the outcomes, to search for possible solutions, to implement the one considered more valid, and to follow-up the implementation. This is exactly what our campaign has tried to do in the frame work of what said before of the necessity of re-equilibrating the unbalanced conflict. The reasons of the adoption of the Kosovo conflict was the fact that the Albanian population, in its struggle, was and is using nonviolence, and that its leaders had asked to all nonviolent movements to help their respective countries to understand the Albanian cause and to overcome the fact, said many times by the Albanian intellectuals, that big powers seem to understand only the language of arms, and not that of nonviolence.

The Campaign is not a single organization but a coordination of many Italian Non Governmental organizations. In was co-promoted, in 1992, by: International Movement for Reconciliation; Pax Christi (both their italian sections); Blessed are the peace makers; Agimi-Caritas of Otranto. Many other movements joined later, among them: the Peace and Desarmament Commission of the Baptist and Valdensian Churches; the Nonviolent Movement, the Italian Secretariat for Popular Nonviolent Defence, and some local administrations. The campaign has organized several study trips in the region to which have participated qualified members of the promoting associations. The first objective of the campaign was to make the struggle of the Albanian population known to the Italian people and to our Government and M.P.s, and to explain them the real situation of the area and the risk of a violent explosion. On the basis of the first two study-trips a book of interviews to the Albanians leaders of the struggle has been published in 1993 (16). A Conference in which Serbian, Albanians and Italian scholars confronted each others has been organized at Venice in 1994, with the help of the Regional Government of Veneto (17). In agost 1994 a third delegation, formed by teachers, trainers in nonviolence, local administrators and activist of nonviolent movements, went to the area and spoke with leaders, experts and simple people of the two parts. They had the impression that, also if the situation was tense, a conflict could be still avoided because both parts seemed interested to search for a solution. And they felt

that the interruption of communication between the two groups, the Serbian and the Albanians, connected also to the lack of a common language, had created a “wall against wall” that could be dangerous for the increasing of mutual distrust and hate and, even if motivated by the reason of the nonviolent struggle - i.e. the use, from the Albanian side, of the technique of the “parallel government” - could bring to an armed conflict. On the base of their report ⁽¹⁸⁾ the CSNK proposed to the Italian Campaign of Tax Resisters (they refuse to give their money to the army and ask for a legal recognition of a nonviolent defence) the opening in Pristina of a so called “Peace Embassy”, a long term permanence of volunteers who would work for these aims. 1) to build in Pristina a place where peoples of different ethnic groups, of different cultures and political and religious faith could meet together; 2) to facilitate the intercultural relationships; 3) to find new elements to break the “wall against wall” (to find and cultivate so called “peace hotbeds”- i.e. groups and organizations not affected by the ‘ethnic cleansing’ in which different ethnic groups still cooperate); 4) creating networks between Albanians and Serbian pacifists and nonviolent people; 5) to promote twinnings between Italian and Kossovars organizations and schools at every level; 6) to monitor the respect of human rights ⁽¹⁹⁾. The Tax Resisters accepted the proposal and financed the project. Others financial supports have come from local administrations, from some private companies, and local groups of support of the initiative (which are very important for the work as they connect the activities in Pristina with the Italian population and are ready to act in case of necessity). This allowed the “Peace Embassy” to be opened at the beginning of 1995. But after three months the long term volunteer was expelled by the Serbian police with an interdiction to come back for one year ⁽²⁰⁾. It was reopened again, unofficially - thanks to a sabbatical year granted to me by the University of Florence, renewed later- at the end of 1995 with the presence in Pristina of me and my wife, and up to now, with some interruptions due to the lack of a work permit that could allow to stay more than three months, and also to personal engagements in Italy or Europe, has been active. From the beginning until now, one or two volunteers could stay in Pristina for about 10 months (somebody else joined for shorter periods). The work carried on in this period has been: 1) an extensive research, interviewing hundreds people of different ethnic groups (Serbians, Albanians from Kosov@ or Macedonia, Montenegrins, Macedonians), with a political engagement, experts, or simple citizens, on the causes of the conflict and on the possible solutions to it. This work has brought to the written report “Kosovo: a war not fought” presented at a meeting of the working group for the constitution of “European Civil Peace Corps” (Bruxelles, 26/6/1996)⁽²¹⁾; 2) the twinning of an organization of handicapped people from Kosovo (seen as a “peace hotbed”, as it is formed by mixed ethnic groups) with similar organizations in Italy. These twinnings have brought to the furniture of needed material (several electric wheel chairs, many antidecubit cushions, and other sanitary material) to handicapped peoples in Kosov@, or economic help to the organization or to families of handicapped people (also through the adoption of some of these families by families, schools, or local Italian administrations), and to help one of the leaders of this organization needing urgent health interventions; 3) help to the work, made mostly by the Campaign in Italy, of making the situation of Kosov@ been known to our politicians and to the population (a video on the Kosov@ situation and on the work of the Embassy, prepared by some members of the Campaign, distributed in Italy and shown in many town; 10.000 cards sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Italy, and to the Presidency of the European Community, with a drawing of Kosovo and a written comment to convey the idea that the situation of Kosov@ is critical, and that it is necessary to act before it is too late; conferences and seminars in several places of Italy (Bologna, Aosta, Cagliari, Roma, Desio, Vicenza, Milano, Gallipoli (Lecce), Firenze, Imola, Torino, Gorizia, Modena); the writings of many articles in several Italian journals; the preparation of a photo exhibition on the nonviolent struggles in Kosov@, that is actually going around Italy; the duplication of a Dossier ⁽²²⁾ on the Kosov@ issue sent to all supporting groups and to the members of our Government, to the members of the Commissions of Foreign Affairs of the Parliament, and

to all political groups represented in our Parliament - in this dossier it is included a press review on Kosov@, news about the birth and the work of the CSNK, the documents prepared for a parliamentary delegation that was ready to visit the area, but was blocked in Rome by an air plain strike (Alex Langer was among them), and the quoted article presented in Bruxelles; 4) a project of cooperation in research, financed by the Italian Ministry of Education, between an Italian University (Lecce) and the two University in Pristina (Serbian and Albanian) and the Macedonian University of Skopie and the Albanian University of Tetovo. We are still working to start this research, very difficult in the current situation in which the different ethnic groups - Serbian and Macedonian at one side and Albanian at the other side - see each other as enemy and refuse to cooperate; we are trying to overcome these difficulties proposing a bilateral agreement by the University of Lecce and each of the others, or by working with the University of Belgrado that is actually bringing on a similar research; 5) a comparative analysis of the activities and proposals for mediation and nonviolent resolution of the conflict, analysis that has examined the activities and documents of seven organizations, and has brought to the writing of a report of 70 pages, that has been presented at the "Forum on Kosovo" organized in Vienna (18-19-20 April) by the "European Action Council for Peace in the Balkans" (Amsterdam) and the "Carnegie Endowment for International Peace" (Washington). At this meeting have participated several experts from Kosov@ and Serbia, and from many other countries. This work compared our proposal, presented in the quoted paper, with those of the organizations that had the same aim of preventing the explosion of an armed conflict in the area ; 6) a proposal of the opening in Pristina of a "European Cultural Centre" that would use language and culture not as a way of division, but as a means of exchange, communication, and dialogue. This proposal has been presented, for support, to the Italian Government and to the Cultural Commission of the European Parliament, and it is reproduced in the annexe.

But before coming to the main object of this paper, i.e. the proposal of the involvement of the European Community in the Kosov@ problem through "European Civil Peace Corps", let us give a look to the quoted comparison of our proposals with those of others groups and organizations.

4) a comparative analysis of activities and proposals for mediation and nonviolent resolution"⁽²³⁾.

The analysis was carried out in Pristina (Kosov@) from 16 February to 25 March, and in Florence (Italy) until the 12 April 1997. The report is in Italian. For comparative analysis I have used the present scheme: 1) Organization/s interested and its/theirs features; 2) Declared aims of intervention and inspiring principles; 3) Modalities and length of the preliminary work that has brought to the proposal/s; 4) Specific proposal/s; 5) Follow-up of the proposal/s. The proposals included in the analysis are (in brackets the acronym used in the text): a) Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research, Lund, Sweden (TFF); b) Italian Campaign for a Nonviolent Solution of the problem of Kosov@ (CSNK); c) Greek Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP); d) Aspen Report " Unfinished Peace", International Commission for the Balkans, Berlin, Washington (ASPEN); e) Sant' Egidio Community, Rome (CSE); f) "Toward Comprehensive Peace in Southeast Europe", Center for Preventive Action, New York (CPA) g) Bertelsmann Foundation, Munich, Germany (BF). I outlined synthetically each of these proposal according to the above mentioned scheme, I presented a final synthesis of the proposals (SINT); and I have also written a final commentary.

The proposals are all presented by "Non Governmental Organization" on the basis of "people's diplomacy, or second level diplomacy". From the point of view of methodology we can distinguish four principals methods: 1) fact-finding missions (TFF, ELIAMEP, ASPEN, CPA); 2) a continued presence in the area, for several months, by a so called "Peace Embassy", plus fact-

finding missions (CSNK); 3) a silent and extended work with many bilaterals meetings (CSE); 4) a conference and work in small groups formed by one expert from both sides plus one from a third party in creating “scenarios” on the future possible situation (BF).

The analysis of the proposals shows a great difference between the Serbian and the Albanian proposals (in the framework of the BF project): 1) from the Serbian side the proposals advanced are: a) regionalization of Serbia: a division of Serbia (including Kosovo) in smaller multiethnic areas ; b) internal delimitation of Kosovo, 25 % of the present territory being integrated in Serbia; the rest, always in Serbia, but enjoying a certain autonomy (similar to that of South Tyrol); c) an autonomy like that of “South Tyrol” for all the Kosovo; (in the meanwhile a third document from the Serbian part about the independence of Kosov@ has been written, but we dont yet have it) 2) from the Albanian side the proposals advanced are: a) the starting of a dialogue, not on final solutions, but on the ways to better the conditions of life of the population, with the creation of a mixed commission. This should be formed by official rapresentatives of Serbia, Kosova, and International Organizations (ONU, UE, OSCE), or important representatives of the international community (like the USA); b) a new Yugoslav Confederation formed by the three prevalents nationalities (Serbian, Albanians, Montenegrins), on equal basis; c) a free and independent Kosova reached by peaceful means, without an army, and with open borders. The proposals of the International Non Government Organizations can be divided in two sectors: 1) *content proposals* (a division of Kosov@ in two parts: one integrated in Serbia, the other independent (Janjic); an autonomy of the whole region based on the model of the Åland Islands, with an international agreement, and a status of neutrality and demilitarization recognized to Kosov@ (CSNK); c) different types of relationships within the FRY, with many possible models (ELIAMEP); d) a Southern Balkan Confederation (CSNK)); 2) *proposals based on processes* (the main focus of these proposals is not to find the final solution but to start a dialogue between the two parts making small steps to better the situation of the population of the area and create confidence to approach other problems (especially CSE, but also ASPEN, CPA, and all the others). The process has been divided in three fases: a) construction of mutual trust; b) dialogue and negotiation; c) an interim agreement (CPA). The conditions for starting and progressing in this process are at the center of most of these proposals. According to several proposals the intervention of a third party, and of the international community are necessary. CPA thinks it necessary to keep the “outer level of sanctions” toward FRY until considerable steps toward the normalization of the area are made; ASPEN thinks necessary that UNPREDEP, the United Nation’s Armed Forces in Macedonia, stay there until a solution for Kosovo is found. TFF proposes the institution of a Transitory Administration of the United Nations in Kosovo - UNTANS - to help the process go ahead. CSNK proposes the intervention in Kosovo of an “European Civil Peace Corp” a non-armed body, well trained in the techniques of nonviolent struggles, and in the resolution of conflicts, that is currently under discussion at the European Parliament. Surroi (BF) proposes the constitution of a mixed authority with the participation of the International Organizations). But, in reality, some of the preconditions posed by the international community are prejudicial to the final solution and leave little space to a real development of the process and to the free choice of each side.

In the final commentary I briefly examine the current situation in Albania, criticising Italy and Europe for not having done anything to prevent the conflict from developing, and call them not to repeat the same mistake for Kosovo. I underline the necessity of the participation of a third authoritative party to help the two sides to reach an agreement taking as an example the problem of Serbian Administrative Elections and the struggles of both the opposition and students for the recognition of the current results. In this case the intervention of the commission of OSCE has helped to solve peacefully the problem. The participation of the international community can be of several kinds: a) positive incentives, as help to FRY to develop its economy in the frame work of a development of all the Balkans, as a premium to restore the previous autonomy of Kosovo; b)

negative sanctions, as the keeping in life of the “outer level” of sanctions, or an obligatory arbitration in case that no solution is found after a certain period (ASPEN); c) direct intervention or participation, these can go from very discrete forms as those brought on by CSE, or proposed by ELIAMEP, to more direct and important ones as UNTANS (TFF), European Civil Peace Corps - ECPC (CSNK), or to the maintenance of UNPREDEP in Macedonia until a solution is found; d) the organization of an International Conference on Kosovo (Pula -BF-, CSNK).

Finally I examine the factors that can play for a positive and a negative solution of the problem, and make some concrete proposals to better the situation. These are: 1) helping the Kosovar population to express their will - without police repression and internal and foreign interference - in the next presidential and parliamentary elections that can be considered a kind of popular referendum as the two main Albanian parties (LDK and Parliamentary Party) present two prestigious leaders (Rugova and Demaçi), and two different options of solution (independence: LDK; a new Confederation with three equal entities, Serbia, Montenegro, and Kosovo - called “Balkania”: PP); 2) to stop sending back to Kosov@ refugees from the countries of Europe, until the situation of that region begins to move toward a solution, and until their resettlement in the area can be controlled by international bodies; 3) without a criminalisation of economic activities it is nevertheless necessary that European countries don't look just to their economic interest, considering the Balkans simply as a market for their own interest, and help, on the contrary, a plan for the economic development of all the Balkans; 4) while working for a final solution of the problem, and in addition to the presence in the area of OSCE and other International Organizations, or waiting that “European Civil Peace Corps” could become a reality, it could be useful to establish, in Pristina, an “European Cultural Center” that could use culture and language not as a way of division but as means of exchange and dialogue.

5) European Civil Peace Corps: a possible solution to the Kosov@ issue? (24)

A possibility to be studied is that a kind of **task force**, like the one we are trying to implement, the so called “European Civil Peace Corps”, could work for the prevention of the explosion of an armed conflict and help the progress of a process of finding a solution, step by step. The situation in Kosov@ is far from being solved; on the contrary, after the Dayton agreements, there seems to be an escalation of open conflict. One of the main reasons is that the Serbs don't want to appear weak, and they feel they have given too much and gained too little in Dayton. They don't want to lose also this “low intensity war” in Kosovo. On the contrary the Albanians, who have been struggling for 5 years for their independence through nonviolence, have the impression that big powers understand only the language of arms and also they don't want to lose their battle, and will not accept, therefore, to keep down their demands. And while everybody speaks of peace meetings, and of possible solutions of the problem, the reality, seen from Kosov@, seems much different. There are no real signs of a serious research of solution, while the situation has become tense because of recent actions by, at one side, Serbian refugees who, sent in that region against their will and protected by the Serbian police, have killed several Albanians and wounded many others. Other Albanians have been killed or tortured by the Serbian Police. On the other side also several Serbians or some Albanians considered Serbian spies have been killed by a so called “Kosova Liberation Army”. Therefore the situation is very tense and there is the necessity, and urgency, of a nonarmed intervention of the international community to study the real situation, to meet both sides, to propose some possible solutions accepted by both parts. Could this be done by the “task force” we are trying to promote?. In this case it should start as quickly as possible in the form of a small study group, partly formed by E.P. of different parties and of representatives of N.G.O.s working in these fields and well trained to nonviolence and nonviolent solutions of conflicts, should be officially accredited by the E.C., and have the authority coming not only from their

experiences but also from their accreditation. And they should go in the area as soon as possible for a feasibility study.

We have seen in our previous documents and papers (25) how serious the Kosovo situation is and how great the risk is of an armed conflict which could become even larger than that of Bosnia, since it would necessarily involve all neighbouring countries. We have also seen how the Serbs' position, considering Kosovo as their internal problem, and that of the Kosovo Albanians, seeking international involvement, are totally opposed. We have also examined the first signals of a passage from a nonviolent struggle, full of sacrifices and endurances for the Albanians, to some armed interventions which, may be, are just provocations, but which risk causing the situation to explode.

The agreement about the normalization of the situation of schools, signed in September 1996 by Milosevic and Rugova, with the help of the Community of Sant'Egidio, has brought much hope in Kosovo that a first step to the final solution could have been done. But the non implementation of the agreement, after more than six months by the signature of it, is reversing the situation and developing a big despair that can be dangerous for the possible outcomes of the conflict. One of the reasons given for the stalling of the situation, and for the non-implementation of the agreement from the Serbian part, is the lack, by the Community of Sant'Egidio, of a force of imposition (26). So there is a common idea that a strongest third part, as U.E. or O.S.C.E., or USA or U.N., should be directly involved in the mediation of the conflict. Also the recent meeting in New York (April 7-9 1997), to which have participated important politicians of both side (but not of the ruling Serbian Party), have recognized the need of such involvement. The meeting arrived at these jointly agreed positions: "1) Kosovo constitutes a serious problem that requires an urgent solution. Without international encouragement and assistance the current lack of confidence between the sides cannot be overcome or a lasting settlement reached; 2) The problem can only be resolved by mutual accord reached through dialogue that is entered into with no preconditions or prejudgments of possible outcomes; 3) The agreement must be based on the principles of democratization, mutual respect between the sides, respect for human rights, both individual and collective and promotion of regional stability through respect for Helsinki principles concerning borders. An interim solution requires a democratic Kosovo and a democratic Serbia".

But one of the obstacles to the starting of this process is the refuse of the Serbian Government of the participation of a third part, considered by them as an interference to a so called "internal problem of Serbia". So is difficult to overcome this opposition unless the International Community would intervene and convince the Serbian Government to negotiate. But, on the other side, the Albanians (if not specified, we refer to those of Kosovo) declared that, in order to open a real dialogue on an equal basis with the Government of Belgrade, besides the intervention of the international community, or at least of an authoritative foreign country recognized by the conflicting parties as a third party, the demilitarisation of Kosovo and the departure of the Serbian military forces who occupy the territory is necessary. This is proposed also by several of the projects cited (CPA, TFF, CSNK). But the Serbian inhabitants are totally opposed because they fear revenge from the Albanians. In order to protect them from such risks, even if the choice of the great majority of Albanians for a nonviolent strategy makes this risk very limited, the demilitarisation of Kosovo should be connected with the arrival of neutral persons who guarantee and promote a calm atmosphere and a distension leading to dialogue between the two parties. Intervention of the armed forces under the command of the United Nations and, even more the Nato Forces, would be considered, by the Serbian population, and also by at least part of the Albanians, as a dangerous intrusion. And, as happened in other areas it might cause the start of an armed conflict, and not a solution to the problem. That's why the idea of the intervention in Kosovo of a European Civil Peace Corps, which the former South Tyrol European Deputee, Alex Langer, promoted and that we are trying to bring to life, and which should be carried out in close contact with United Nations organs, is very favourably accepted both by non-governmental Serbs, and by Albanians. An

Albanian sociologist of Pristina University said: “the ethnic origin doesn’t matter, all peace-loving people not only of Kosov@ but also of Serbia would be happy with this kind of intervention!” (27). And a Serbian jurist of the University of Belgrade said: “It’s the only possible solution to this problem; without such external intervention Milosevic will never accept solving the Kosovo problem in an adequate way “ (28). Belgrade’s “Women in Black” also declared their approval, as did the Antiwar Centre of that town, the Belgrade Circle, and all the Albanian political forces that we could meet, as well as the humanitarian organizations working in this area.

But what activities should be carried out by such a Corps in an area like the one described? In close cooperation with the OSCE mission, which should come back to Kosovo as soon as possible, and in close contact with Non Governmental Organizations that already work in this area, they should:

- 1) monitor the respect of human rights both by Serbs and by Albanians;
- 2) encourage occasions for dialogue and open confrontation between parties in conflict in order to seek for just, nonviolent solutions, not only at the top level, but also at the base; and to monitor the implementation of mutually agreed solutions;
- 3) help the recovery of economical, social, cultural life in this area, encouraging and enabling all Albanians to go back to their jobs from which they had been dismissed;
- 4) help the return to Kosovo of all the young men who emigrated in order not to perform military service - helping them to obtain the right to be exempted from military service -; help the return of people or families who emigrated because they felt threatened or because they did not have an adequate income;
- 5) help to organize elections to allow the population of the area to express their will in relation to the future of this region.

But the most important thing is not to delay this intervention any further. The situation is extremely tense and a delay could be fatal. At any rate this intervention could start gradually, with a small nucleus of well prepared people who start to work in this area and who can call in others according to need.

On the other hand, it’s also necessary that such an intervention does not provide an excuse in order not to undertake, at the European Community level, more radical political choices (for example for the organization of an International Conference concentrating specifically on the problem of Kosovo, as requested by the Albanian leadership; or regarding possible economic helps to develop the whole area of the Balkans in view, may be, of a possible future “Confederation of Southern Balkan Countries”; or on the recognition of the educational degrees of “parallel schools”, and help to bring on the agreement on schools).

But as said before, the possible outcome should not be prejudged and left to the ongoing of the process of dialogue of the two parts, with the help of a third mediating force that should get involved as soon as possible due to the high risk of a conflagration that could involve all the South Balkans. We have to study if the intervention of a nonviolent and well prepared to nonviolent conflict resolution corp (ECPC) in this area could not help this process to develop and go further, and in the meanwhile to see if the organization in Pristina, of an European Cultural Centre, of which we include the project in annexe, could not help the bettering of the actual situation and smothe the actual conflict, helping the two parts to find a common and agreed solution.

Our organization (CSNK) hopes that this warning to work rapidly on the prevention of this conflict, may be seriously taken into consideration by the European Community and that the economic interests of single countries in the partition of the Balkan market taking a concern only in one’s own business (which seems to be evidenced by the haste with which many countries formally recognized the FRY, without first taking into account the solution of the problem of Kosovo) may be put aside for a moment, in order to let the world-wide collective interest in a just peace and in the

prevention of a new war prevail. The intervention made by the OSCE after the elections in FRY, to find the correct results of them, is a good example of a work that could avoid a possible civil war in Serbia and Montenegro. The same should be done in Kosov@ as the elimination by force and fraud of the 1974 Constitution, that was at the starting of the actual conflict, should not be accepted for granted by the International Community, and asks its intervention for finding a just and peaceful solution. We hope that this may lead to rapid resolute intervention in this situation which is so worthy of support and that, in this way, the opinion of many Albanians will not be confirmed: that the international community, Europe in particular, understands only the language of arms (and, it may be added, economic interests) and not the language of peace and of nonviolence.

Notes

(1) The Serbians call it Kosovo (in reality they have renamed it Kosmet = Kosovo+ Metochia), the Albanians call it Kosova. We, as some peace groups do (Balkan Peace Team, Kosov@ Peace Group, ecc.), prefer this way to be over the divisions implicit in the difference of names.

(2) I have developed this issue in A. L'Abate, "Nonviolent Interventions in armed conflicts", in M. Choudhuri, R. Singh, eds, Mahatma Gandhi: 125 years, Gandhian Institute of Studies, Rajghat Varanasi, U.P., 1995. See also, Segreteria per la Difesa Popolare Nonviolenta, ed., Invece delle armi: obiezione di coscienza, difesa nonviolenta, corpo civile di pace europeo, Fuori Thema, Bologna, 1996.

(3) F. Casadio, "Operazioni di pace dell'ONU nella gestione e nel controllo dei conflitti", in F. Tullio ed., Una forza nonarmata dell'ONU: utopia o necessità?, Formazione e Lavoro, Roma, 1989.

(4) Ibid., and P.U. Jacobsen, The four 'ws' of the collective military peace enforcement in the new world order: why, when, what, (by and against) whom?, paper presented at the II Congress of EUPRA, Budapest, 12-14 nov. 1993.

(5) A. L'Abate, Il Kossovo ed il conflitto serbo-albanese: attività e proposte per la mediazione e la risoluzione nonviolenta, Dipartimento di Studi Sociali, Università di Firenze, ciclostilato, Aprile 1997. An English synthesis of the paper has been presented at the "Forum on Kosovo", organized in Vienna (18-20 April 1997) by the "European Action Council for Peace in the Balkans" (Amsterdam) and the "Carnegie Endowment for International Peace" (Washington).

(6) On the activities of this Community in regard of the Kosovo-issue see the work quoted in the previous note, pp. 40-45.

(7) In regard to differences between "pacification" and "conflict resolution", A. L'Abate, Consenso, conflitto e mutamento sociale: introduzione ad una sociologia della nonviolenza, F. Angeli, Milano, 1990, pp. 221-227.

(8) Ibid., pp. 227-231.

(9) See the synthesis of the work of the "Center for Preventive Action" of New York in the report quoted in the note 5, pp.46-49.

(10) A. L'Abate, Consenso, conflitto e mutamento sociale....., quoted, p. 269.

(11) G. Sharp, The politics of nonviolent action, Porter Sargent, Boston, 1973, pp.423-433.

(12) As organisers of two study-trips to visit gandhian communities and initiatives, called "On the footsteps of Gandhi".

(13) A. L'Abate, Consenso, conflitto e mutamento sociale, quoted.

(14) Segreteria per la Difesa Popolare Nonviolenta, ed., Invece delle armi, quoted, pp. 189-190.

(15) A. L'Abate, Il Kossovo ed il conflitto serbo-albanese....., quoted, pp. 26-30.

(16) V. Salvoldi, L. Gjergji, eds, Resistenza nonviolenta nella ex-Jugoslavia: dal Kossovo la testimonianza dei protagonisti, EMI, 1993.

(17) The main papers of the conference have been published in "Azione Nonviolenta", October 1994.

(18) "Prevenire la guerra nel Kossovo", in Azione Nonviolenta, October 1994, pp. 2-5.

(19) Ibid., p. 5.

(20) The text of the press release, after the expulsion of our volunteer, has been reproduced in the "Dossier Kossovo: per non dimenticare e per prevenire l'esplosione del conflitto armato", Campagna Kossovo, reneotyped, luglio 1996, pp. 43-44.

(21) The Italian text is included in the quoted "Dossier", pp. 51-62.

(22) quoted in note n. 20.

(23) A. L'Abate, Il Kossovo ed il conflitto serbo-albanese....., quoted.

(24) This paragraph owes much to the proposal published in “Invece delle armi”, quoted, and to the paragraph with similar title in “Kosovo: a war not fought”, quoted.

(25) A. L’Abate, Kosovo: a war not fought, quoted

(26) A. L’Abate, Il Kossovo ed il conflitto serbo-albanese....., quoted, pp.44-45.

(27) A. e A.L. L’Abate, Kossovo: interviste e lettere, Dipartimento di Studi Sociali, Univ. Firenze, maggio 1996, reneotyped, pp. 68-70.

(28) Ibid., pp. 13-15.

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Annexe n.1

PROJECT FOR A EUROPEAN CULTURAL CENTER IN PRISHTINA

The situation in Kosovo is very hard. Day by day there is the risk that the saying, concerning war in former Yugoslavia, “Everything started in Kosovo, and everything will end in Kosovo”, may become reality and that the conflict, from the actual situation - with one of the parties, the Serbian one, armed, while the other, the Albanian one, reacting nonviolently - may violently explode.

The relations between Serbs and Albanians are worsened by a reciprocal distrust, and by the wall in communication which has been created between the two populations. Mutual communication becomes day by day harder also because of the language problem. In fact Albanian children don’t learn the Serbian language in their “parallel” schools any more, and Serbian children, likewise, don’t have the opportunity to learn the Albanian language any more, as happened before the forced abrogation of the prerogatives granted to Kosovo by the 1974 Constitution.

In this situation the settlement in Prishtina of a European Cultural Center may offer a contribution to improve mutual relations and encourage dialogue in order to find a nonviolent solution to the conflict.

The U.S.A. has already opened an Information Center (U.S.I.A.) in Prishtina that has inquired about the attitudes of Kosovo inhabitants, and that keeps in contact with the people, offering information about U.S.A. and organising cultural activities of different kinds. The opening of this Centre offered, for the first time, both Serbian and Albanian local leaders the opportunity to meet each other, and was welcomed with particular joy by the Albanians since it helped them to break the isolation which affects them.

It has to be mentioned that the European Parliament has recently approved a proposal about the opening of a European Information Center in Prishtina, and that I presented this project to the Cultural Committee of the European Parliament.

The Center could organize these activities:

1) Courses for beginners and medium level students of Albanian, Serbian, Italian, English, French, German language.

2) Showing of movies by well known authors from various European countries in the original language, if possible with subtitles in a well known language (English or French) and facilitating discussions about the issue presented by the movie.

3) Debates about issues of common interest, for example about nonviolence, peace research, conflict resolution, Europe, the idea of a Balkanic Confederation, different proposals for the solution of the Kosovo problem, etc.

4) Researches-activities about issues of common interest like: mutual prejudice between Serbs and Albanians and how to overcome them, nonconflicting ways to overcome the risk of a war in South Balkan area, and to find a solution accepted by all parties.

5) Mini-library with books and newspapers and journals in different languages. For the Italian language the University of Florence (Italy) has offered, in view of the Center, a stock of Italian books, mainly the classical ones (Dante, Manzoni, Pirandello) but also by contemporary writers (unluckily the books have been stolen in Belgrado with the car was accompanying us to Prishtina). In this library there should be a collection of the main European and local newspapers like, for France: “Le Monde” and “Monde Diplomatique”, for Italy “La Repubblica” and “Corriere della Sera”, etc.

6) Other cultural activities will result as necessary. Particularly the Center should keep in contact with different European Countries, sending regularly reports about the local situation, organizing visits in Kosovo of interested persons or of Members of the European Parliament or of different Parliaments in Europe, in order to reduce the distance between Kosovo people and others peoples;

7) Exchanges and visits between Albanian as well as Serbian students of different schools, on one side, and students of different European countries, on the other side, and other ways of communication and exchange which may prove useful to overcome the gap between different languages, cultures, traditions.

8) Ways of interreligious dialogue, so that the different religions may become peace instruments, caring for mutual understanding.

9) Meetings on various issues and “trainings”, particularly on nonviolence, nonviolent conflict resolution, mediation, or to overcome prejudices, etc.