



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Workshop “Towards a Strategy for Reconciliation in the OSCE Area”

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Panel 1: Reconciliation and Convergence – Building the foundation for a security community

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INTRODUCTION

I WARMLY WELCOME THIS INITIATIVE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL IN ORGANISING TODAY’S EVENT.

I MUST CONFESS MY SURPRISE WHEN I ATTENDED THE ‘SECURITY DAYS’ EVENT LAST JUNE WHERE ONE OF THE SESSIONS WAS DEVOTED TO RECONCILIATION AND DISCOVERED THAT THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT THE TOPIC OF RECONCILIATION HAD BEEN ADDRESSED IN THIS FORMAT WITHIN THE OSCE.

THIS ABSENCE PROBABLY REFLECTS THE GREAT SENSITIVITY AND EMOTIONS THAT THE MATTER EVOKES. IT ALSO BELIES THE DIFFERENT APPROACHES THAT HAVE BEEN FOLLOWED IN THE PAST IN SOCIETIES THAT HAVE EMERGED FROM DICTATORSHIPS, ARBITRARY REGIMES AND ARMED CONFLICT , BETWEEN THOSE WHO PREFER, USUALLY UNSUCCESSFULLY, TO BRUSH THE PAST UNDER THE CARPET AND THOSE WHO SEEK TRUTH AND JUSTICE ABOUT THE PAST.

FOR THE LATTER, THE QUESTION ARISES WHETHER TRUTH AND JUSTICE CAN BY THEMSELVES LEAD TO RECONCILIATION.?

LUSTRATION AND INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS

IF WE LOOK AT SOME EXAMPLES FROM THE PAST, WE WILL FIND THAT THE METHODS USED IN SEARCHING FOR THE TRUTH AND BRINGING JUSTICE VARY CONSIDERABLY FROM ONE COUNTRY TO ANOTHER OR FROM ONE REGION TO ANOTHER.

ON THE ONE HAND, THE CONTINUING LUSTRATION POLICIES OF SOME COUNTRIES IN THE BALKAN REGION FOR EXAMPLE HAVE USUALLY MORE TO DO WITH RETRIBUTION AND REVENGE THAN WITH THE SEARCH FOR JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION.

ON THE OTHER HAND, INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNALS WERE ESTABLISHED SPECIFICALLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF BRINGING PERPETRATORS OF WAR CRIMES AND CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY TO JUSTICE AND TO END THE CULTURE OF IMPUNITY. IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECALL IN THIS CONTEXT, THAT ONE OF THE FOUR TENETS OF THE WORK OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR

THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA IS TO 'CONTRIBUTE TO THE RESTORATION OF PEACE BY PROMOTING RECONCILIATION IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA'.

MANY WOULD ARGUE HOWEVER, PARTICULARLY FOLLOWING THE RECENT VERDICTS HANDED DOWN BY THE TRIBUNAL, THAT WHILE THE TRIBUNAL MAY HAVE BROUGHT CLOSURE OF PAST INJUSTICES FOR SOME, IT HAS ALSO CREATED A FEELING OF VICTIMISATION FOR OTHERS, PARTICULARLY WITH THE ABSENCE OF PARALLEL EFFORTS FOR RECONCILIATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS MANDATE. AND UNFORTUNATELY IF JUSTICE IS PERCEIVED MERELY AS RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE, THE END RESULT WILL NOT SERVE THE CAUSE OF RECONCILIATION.

PERHAPS THE PROBLEM RUNS DEEPER AND RELATES TO HOW INTERNATIONAL LAW IS PERCEIVED TODAY. IN HIS LATEST BOOK ENTITLED 'GOVERNING THE WORLD – THE HISTORY OF AN IDEA', THE AUTHOR MARK MAZOWER RECALLS THAT, WHILE IN THE PAST, INTERNATIONAL LAW HAD BEEN PROCLAIMED AS A CREED OF UNIVERSAL APPLICATION, TODAY IN CONTRAST, 'THE APPEAL TO LAW HAS BECOME A VOCABULARY OF PERMISSIONS, A MEANS OF ASSERTING POWER AND CONTROL THAT NORMALIZES THE DEBATABLE AND JUSTIFIES THE EXCEPTION'

THE BEST APPROACH

DETERMINING WHAT IS THE BEST APPROACH TOWARDS ACHIEVING LASTING RECONCILIATION IS CLEARLY NOT EASY. WHAT IS REQUIRED IS A RECONCILIATION PROCESS WHICH, TO QUOTE THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION, ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU, 'BALANCES THE REQUIREMENTS OF JUSTICE, ACCOUNTABILITY, STABILITY, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION'.

INDEED THE SOUTH AFRICAN MODEL OF TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION IS ARGUABLY THE MOST ADVANCED OF ITS KIND. IT EMPHASISED THE ROLE OF RECONCILIATION NOT JUST TO BRING PAST INJUSTICES TO LIGHT, BUT ALSO AS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF NATION BUILDING IN A POST CONFLICT SOCIETY.

WHATEVER THE APPROACH FOLLOWED, RECONCILIATION IS A LONG PROCESS WHICH REQUIRES MUCH PATIENCE, SENSITIVITY AND PERSEVERANCE. IT IS OFTEN SEEN AS THE 'UNFINISHED BUSINESS' OF A POST CONFLICT PEACE PROCESS. BUT IF ADDRESSED EARLY ENOUGH, THE REWARDS ARE WORTH THE EFFORT. IT IS A PROCESS WHICH CAN GREATLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A 'COMMUNITY OF VALUES', WHICH IN TURN, AS STATED IN THE IDEAS REPORT (SEE BELOW), IS AN IMPORTANT FOUNDATION FOR A GENUINE SECURITY COMMUNITY.

ROLE OF THE OSCE

THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT IN MY MIND THAT THE CONCEPT OF RECONCILIATION IN ITS WIDEST SENSE MUST BE VIEWED AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE SO-CALLED 'CONFLICT CYCLE'. IT SHOULD BE INCORPORATED AS A PRINCIPLE INTO THE COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION, AND SHOULD ALSO FEATURE PROMINENTLY IN THE DELIBERATIONS ON THE HELSINKI + 40 EXERCISE. AFTER ALL, WHO WOULD CONTEST THAT ONE OF THE MOTIVATIONS REFLECTED IN THE SPIRIT OF THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT IS THAT OF RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE PEOPLES OF EUROPE, BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS THE POLITICAL DIVIDE, AND BRINGING DOWN THE PREJUDICES, MISTRUST AND OTHER BARRIERS IMPOSED BY HISTORY.

FAILURE TO INCLUDE THE CONCEPT OF RECONCILIATION COULD EASILY ENDANGER THE LONG TERM STABILITY IN A POST CONFLICT SOCIETY. IT COULD BECOME A FACTOR OF INSECURITY AND INSTABILITY, AND ACTUALLY BE THE CAUSE OF RESURGENCE OF CONFLICT.

BOTH THE EURO-ATLANTIC SECURITY INITIATIVE, LAUNCHED EARLIER THIS YEAR AT THE MUNICH SECURITY CONFERENCE, AND THE RECENT IDEAS REPORT HAVE BROUGHT A WELCOME ATTENTION TO THE ISSUE OF RECONCILIATION AS PART OF THE SECURITY DEBATE.

AT THE SAME TIME, AS BOTH REPORTS HAVE HIGHLIGHTED, THE CONCEPT OF RECONCILIATION IS ITSELF MULTIFACETED. THERE IS NO MAGIC FORMULA OR BLUEPRINT, NO VADEMECUM ON THE RIGHT APPROACH. BUT IT IS A PROCESS WHERE THE OSCE CAN PLAY A PIONEERING ROLE.

CONDITIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL RECONCILIATION PROCESS

I WOULD SUGGEST TWO IMPORTANT CONDITIONS SHOULD BE MET FOR A SUCCESSFUL RECONCILIATION PROCESS:

- A RECONCILIATION PROCESS SHOULD INVOLVE ALL SECTORS OF SOCIETY;
- IT SHOULD EMERGE FROM THE SOCIETY ITSELF AND BE ENCOURAGED RATHER THAN IMPOSED FROM OUTSIDE ; IT SHOULD INCLUDE A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH, FROM HISTORY TEACHING TO EDUCATION, SPORTS AND CULTURE.

SOME EXAMPLES

THERE ARE MANY ELOQUENT EXAMPLES OF RECONCILIATION THAT HAVE HAD A MAJOR IMPACT IN SOCIETIES EMERGING FROM CONFLICT. I WOULD REFER TO TWO POWERFUL MANIFESTATIONS THAT MANY OF US WITNESSED THIS YEAR :

- FIRSTLY AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL, WHEN WE SAW THE NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE FIRST MINISTERS PETER ROBINSON AND MARTIN MCGUINNESS SITTING SIDE BY SIDE AT THE 27 APRIL CHAIRMANSHIP CONFERENCE IN DUBLIN ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE PROCESS – TWO LEADERS FROM COMPLETELY DIFFERENT TRADITIONS AND POLITICAL BACKGROUNDS NOW WORKING TOGETHER; SIMILARLY THE IMAGE OF QUEEN ELIZABETH SHAKING HANDS WITH MARTIN MCGUINNESS EARLIER THIS YEAR WILL GO DOWN IN HISTORY AS ONE OF THOSE LANDMARK EVENTS IN FOSTERING RECONCILIATION;
- SECONDLY AT THE LOCAL COMMUNITY LEVEL, WHEN TWO FORMER POLITICAL PRISONERS, ONE FROM THE REPUBLICAN TRADITION AND THE OTHER FROM THE LOYALIST TRADITION, NOW WORKING TOGETHER IN LOCAL COMMUNITY PROJECTS, WHO MET WITH THE CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES FROM BOTH CHISINAU AND TIRASPOL DURING THEIR VISIT TO BELFAST TWO MONTHS AGO.

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TRANSNISTRIAN SETTLEMENT PROCESS, WE REACHED AGREEMENT ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA FORUM WHICH WOULD COMPLEMENT THE PEACE PROCESS. AS THE NORTHERN IRELAND EXPERIENCE HAS SHOWN, THE EARLIER CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA ARE INVOLVED IN A POST CONFLICT PEACE PROCESS, PARTICULARLY AT GRASS ROOTS LEVEL, THE GREATER THE LEVEL OF TRUST CREATED AND THE BROADER THE ACCEPTANCE BY THE PUBLIC AT LARGE OF THE SETTLEMENT. THIS ALSO FACILITATES THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION AS WELL AS THAT OF RECONCILIATION AND OVERCOMING THE PREJUDICES OF THE PAST.

EXAMPLES OF THE BOTTOM UP APPROACH ARE NUMEROUS ; I WOULD MENTION THE 'RECOM INITIATIVE',A NETWORK OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS BASED IN BELGRADE WHICH ADVOCATES THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR TRUTH SEEKING AND TRUTH-TELLING ABOUT WAR CRIMES AND OTHER SERIOUS VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA; OR THE MAZE LONG KESH PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION CENTRE IN BELFAST,WHICH WHEN IT IS COMPLETED WILL REPRESENT A UNIQUE TRANSFORMATION OF A FORMER SYMBOL OF CONFLICT TO ONE OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION.

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN PROMOTING RECONCILIATION IS OFTEN UNDERESTIMATED. YET IT CAN HELP TO BUILD TRUST, TOLERANCE AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS PARTICULARLY IN MULTIETHNIC SOCIETIES. THE GREAT CONDUCTOR DANIEL BAREMBOIM HAS BROUGHT US MANY INSPIRING EXAMPLES OF MUSIC UNITING DIFFERENT TRADITIONS TOGETHER IN THE MIDDLE EAST,WITH, AS HE PUT IT, 'MUSIC BEING A LANGUAGE OF CONTINUOUS DIALOGUE'.

HISTORY TEACHING AND EDUCATION CAN ALSO PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN PROMOTING RECONCILIATION AND DETERRING ALL TOO MANY ATTEMPTS AT RE- WRITING THE PAST FOR PARTISAN POLITICAL OBJECTIVES. IN THIS RESPECT, THE TEXTBOOKS DEVELOPED BY THE THESSALONIKI CENTRE FOR DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IS ONE OF MANY EXAMPLES. HOWEVER THE REAL IMPACT OF THESE PROJECTS ULTIMATELY DEPENDS ON THE GOODWILL OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITIES IN A GIVEN COUNTRY OR REGION IN ENSURING INCORPORATION OF THE TEXTBOOKS INTO THE CURRICULA OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM.

CONCLUSION

THESE AND MANY OTHER EXAMPLES, COULD SERVE AS AN INSPIRATION TO THE OSCE IN ITS ACTIVITIES, BOTH AT CENTRAL LEVEL AND THROUGH THE WORK OF ITS FIELD MISSIONS. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT IF THE OSCE WERE TO DRAW UP A LIST OF EXAMPLES OF PROJECTS DEVELOPED WHETHER BY ITS INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THE OFFICE FOR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS OR THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NATIONAL MINORITIES, AS WELL AS PROJECTS DEVELOPED BY OTHER ENTITIES SUCH AS THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO RECONCILIATION, THE END RESULT WOULD BE IMPRESSIVE.

THEY WOULD UNDERLINE THAT IT IS NOT THEORY WHICH CAN HELP US UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF RECONCILIATION IN ACHIEVING A SECURITY COMMUNITY, BUT RATHER THE PRACTICAL MANIFESTATION OUT IN THE FIELD OF HELPING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COME TO TERMS WITH THE PAST. WHERE SUCH ACTIONS ARE TAKEN, IT IS SOCIETY AS A WHOLE WHICH BENEFITS,WORKING TOGETHER FOR A COMMON PURPOSE – FROM A DIVIDED PAST TO A SHARED FUTURE.EVEN A SYMBOLIC GESTURE,SUCH AS A HANDSHAKE, BY A COURAGEOUS LEADER CAN MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN DRIVING THE PROCESS FORWARD

THANK YOU.

