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THE SEVILLE STATEMENT

ON VIOLENCE AND BEYOND

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In order to "construct the defenses of peace" in the minds of individuals, it is often necessary to clear away certain myths that stand in the way. These myths claim that war and violence are inevitable because of biological, or social and historical factors. People who believe in these myths have been shown to be less likely to work for peace. Apparently, they are less willing to make the effort since they believe it cannot succeed.

One of the myths claims that war and violence are inherent in human nature. In recent times, this myth has often been framed in pseudo-scientific terms; war and violence are believed to be genetically programmed in the human genome, or due to forces determined by the structure of the human brain. Other myths encourage people to believe that war and violence are inevitable because of certain social-cultural factors which are deemed to lead necessarily to violence, or which are considered to be so entrenched throughout history that it is hopeless to try to change them.

The myth that "biology condemns humanity to war" was decisively rejected by the Seville Statement on Violence. The Statement was written by specialists for the International Year of Peace in 1986, was endorsed by many scientific organizations, and disseminated via UNESCO decisions. The purpose of this paper is to draw lessons from the development and dissemination of the Seville Statement on Violence, and to suggest that a further step should be taken to reject the myth that war and violence are inevitable because of cultural and social factors.

UNESCO has only recently published the brochure on the Seville Statement on Violence (Adams, 1991), and the support network is still in the process of disseminating the document. It is therefore

premature to draw final conclusions about the undertaking, and the following comments must be seen as preliminary.

The experience of the Seville Statement on Violence confirms the value of producing a document that can be used for broad educational purposes, rather than one which is limited, by its academic nature, to the use of scholars and specialists. Of course, the academic work is necessary to provide the scientific basis for such documents, just as the bulk of an iceberg is required to hold the tip out of the water. In order to obtain the scientific consensus necessary to allow wide dissemination of such a document, the academic foundation must be scrupulously accurate, multidisciplinary, and multicultural. At the same time, however, it must be clear, brief, and unified, so that it can be stated in plain words for readers without a university education.

In order to produce such a coherent statement, it is necessary to limit the scope of the document. Thus, at Seville, we did not try to say everything that could be said, but, to quote the statement, "We are aware that there are many other issues about violence that could be fruitfully addressed from the standpoint of our disciplines, but we restrict ourselves here to what we consider a most important first step."

It may be useful to illustrate the problems of limiting the scope of such a document. One of the issues that was raised at Seville was the question of why it is men rather than women who take part in warfare and other such organized violence. Why have most warriors and military leaders of history been men, and does that suggest some biological and hormonal basis to institutional aggression? Personally, I believe that this is an important question and I have argued elsewhere that men are not biologically more aggressive than woman. Female animals in general are as aggressive as males, but researchers have tended to design their experiments in a way that projects human institutionalized differences onto animal subjects (Adams 1992). Since there was no consensus on the subject in Seville, and our time was very limited, it was necessary to drop the issue from the agenda.

To some extent the complexity of the issues can be reflected, not so much in a primary document, but rather in a book of readings designed to accompany it. Several such books were prepared in

conjunction with Seville Statement (Ramirez et al, 1987; Grobels and Hinde, 1989). However, for various reasons they do not completely fill the need, and I hope that it will be possible to bring out another such book of readings which include the various papers listed in the bibliography of the UNESCO brochure on the Seville Statement. In such a book, there would be no attempt to popularize the subject matter, but rather to present papers in traditional scholarly format, complete with extensive documentation. In producing the brochure for the Seville Statement, we found it useful to produce a version in plain words, designed to be understandable to people without any higher education. Such a version needs to have short, simple sentences and familiar words, but should reflect as accurately and completely as possible the original document.

To make the materials attractive and useful, especially for young people, we have also used photographs and other illustrations, and are in the process of making a poster and leaflet presentation to go along with the brochure. The rationale for the use of these materials for the education of young people comes from studies done on the relationship between attitudes and activity for peace. Studies have found that about 50% of all young people believe some form of the myth that war is inevitable because it is part of human nature (Eckhardt, 1972), and we have shown that young people who believe in this myth are less likely to take part in actions for peace (Adams and Bosch, 1986).

To be scientific about educational work with the Seville Statement, we should conduct some quantitative evaluation of the use of the Seville Statement materials. A precedent exists: the study by Saenger (1954) on "The Effectiveness of the UNESCO Pamphlet Series on Race." We could plan a prospective survey of attitudes of young people in various parts of the world, then expose them to one or several of the teaching materials developed from the Seville Statement, and finally repeat the first survey on* attitudes and activity to determine if they had been significantly changed. A variant, which I would expect to be even more revealing, would be to include some action project along with the exposure to the reading materials. By running appropriate controls, and running such a study in cross-cultural populations, we could evaluate and improve the

materials so that they could make a more powerful contribution to peace education and development.

The educational use of the Seville Statement should not be limited to young people, but should be used at all levels both in education, and in areas of practical activity. For example, in my country, the Seville Statement on Violence was sent by an organization of professional psychologists for peace to each member of the Congress while they were deciding whether to ratify the first major disarmament treaty of recent years, the INF Treaty.

To make the process of dissemination and utilization of the Statement as widespread and effective as possible, we have established with the help of UNESCO a support network linked by a newsletter which I put out three times a year. The first stage in the development of the network was to obtain the endorsement of various scientific organizations, many of which are listed in the brochure. As a second stage, other organizations, including peace groups, educational organizations, etc. were also asked to endorse and disseminate the Statement, and in the process it was supported by the Yamoussoukro Congress and became a part of the UNESCO program. Now we are in a third stage in which we are asking educational organizations to buy large numbers of the brochure for distribution to teachers and to young people.

The lessons we have learned so far from work with the Seville Statement can be summed up as follows:

- We have shown it is possible to get agreement from experts on a unified and clear statement that rejects certain widespread myths that are an obstacle to peace activity;
- It is also possible for such a statement to obtain the endorsement and support of scientific organizations around the world as well as UNESCO; and
- The statement can be presented in a way that is accessible for educational work at all levels, including for young people.

WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP BEYOND SEVILLE ?

At the International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men, organized by UNESCO at Yamoussoukro in 1989, it was suggested that the Seville Statement on Violence should be seen as the first step in a process towards the development of a vision of peace, with the next step to be work on the cultural and social origins of violence. The suggestion from Yamoussoukro can be interpreted to mean that we should now produce a second statement, complementary to the first, in which we reject those myths, couched in cultural and social forms, which are an obstacle to peace because they claim that war and violence are inevitable.

The following argument for a second statement on violence is based on the precedent set by the series of UN'ESCO Statements on Race and their use as a basis for education and for policy development in the straggle against racial discrimination and apartheid. These statements, which were a model for the Seville Statement on Violence, addressed the problem that "for all practical purposes 'race' is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth. The myth of 'race' has created an enormous amount of human and social damage." (UNESCO, 1950).

The UNESCO Statements on Race were made four times by various groups of experts in 1950, 1951, 1964, and 1967. The first statement tended to be weighted more to the perspective of the social sciences. As a result a second statement was made a year later that included a heavier weight from the natural sciences, including some of the leading geneticists of the time. Curiously, in the case of the statement on violence, it was the biological approach that went first, and now it is the turn of the social sciences.

The Statements on Race were the basis for a variety of publications and educational material designed to reject the myths of race. As mentioned above, some of these publications were evaluated by the Saenger study published in 1954. There is no question about the fact that the statements and the materials prepared from them have had an important, positive effect on the consciousness development of many people in the intervening decades. Of course, the problems of racism

have not been eliminated by any means, and the struggle continues, including that at the level of individual consciousness.

There was another important use for the Race Statements that could be a precedent for a series of statements on violence—they were the scientific basis for UNESCO decisions to mobilize social and legal action by people, organizations, and governments to eradicate racialism and racial prejudice. In other words, based on these Statements, UNESCO moved from the realm of theory and education to the domain of practical action. These actions remain controversial to this day, but they have been effective. To show this, one has only to point to the great progress made in recent years in the dismantling of apartheid, for which credit must be given, not only to the struggles of the African people, but also to aid from the international community, including UNESCO.

I believe an argument can be made that the international situation is becoming favorable for a practical struggle against war and institutional violence, similar to the way that a situation developed that made it possible to take action against apartheid. Several converging developments contribute to this new situation. First, there is the economic waste and decay caused by the arms race. This hit the former Soviet Union first since it was not only heavily devoted to arms production, but was also a weaker economy to begin with. Now, however, there are many signs that the fate of the Soviet economy—and the associated political instability—is a fate that threatens other countries as well. People increasingly realize that militarization is not compatible in the long-run with economic development. It has become obvious that those countries which, for one reason or another, are not heavily devoted to military production, are the ones that are thriving. Second, there is the increasing level of literacy, education, global communication and understanding of global economic and social interdependence throughout the world. This lays the foundation for greater popular demand for democracy and peace, which is antithetical to militarization and institutional violence. In fact, UNESCO can be quite proud of its contribution to this trend.

War and institutional violence, in the form of external and internal intervention respectively, must be addressed together. They are two

mutually reinforcing aspects of a single system of militarism that has proved successful for thousands of years, and has come to pervade every aspect of society. The task of eliminating them will not be easy. Just as the attack on racism began with the rejection of the myths that support it, so too, we should begin the attack on war and violence at the level of the myths which have their effect "in the minds of men." As mentioned above, people are less likely to take action for peace if they are hindered by the various myths on the inevitability of war and violence. Before constructing a vision of peace, we must clear the ground.

It is here on this intellectual level, "in the minds of men" that Yamoussoukro has proposed the next step. It considers the Seville Statement a first step, and that there be a study of the cultural and social origins of violence as a second step. Although some people might disagree, I think that a group of qualified experts in the social sciences can draft a statement that is every bit as incisive and enlightening as to the cultural and social factors which contribute to violence, as the Seville Statement was with regard to the contribution of biological factors to the same problem.

A statement on cultural and social factors would be more difficult than the one in Seville, because cultural and social factors are more directly linked to war and violence than biological factors. At Seville, we could simply dismiss certain factors as essentially irrelevant, but a new statement could not do so. Instead, it would have to acknowledge the role of these factors, and then show that they are surmountable by beginning the process of proposing solutions to them.

The uses of this second statement would be similar to the one from Seville, in that it would be used to reject the myths that war and violence are inevitable. To disseminate a second statement would prove easier than the first, since we could make use of the network that was established for the Seville Statement, including the precedent that it should be included in the educational work of UNESCO.

The framing of the cultural and social myths will largely determine the nature of the Statement and will have to be worked out by the drafting group in practice. However, just to give an idea of the

mutually reinforcing aspects of a single system of militarism that has proved successful for thousands of years, and has come to pervade every aspect of society. The task of eliminating them will not be easy. Just as the attack on racism began with the rejection of the myths that support it, so too, we should begin the attack on war and violence at the level of the myths which have their effect "in the minds of men." As mentioned above, people are less likely to take action for peace if they are hindered by the various myths on the inevitability of war and violence. Before constructing a vision of peace, we must clear the ground.

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possibilities, here are six common myths as they might be expressed by the "man in the street."

1. Everybody has a psychological need for scapegoats and enemies which makes violence and war inevitable.
2. People cannot tolerate living with other races, religions, and nationalities once there are too many of them.
3. Political power always corrupts and turns men to despotism.
4. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer, and eventually there must be violent revolutions.
5. As states develop, at a certain point they inevitably expand and become imperialist.
6. A military-industrial complex eventually develops and takes command of the modern economy and mass media.

Posed in such fashion these are myths. Posed more carefully, they' are problems of the modern era that cry out for a solution. Thus, in the process of refuting the myths, it is necessary to begin the process of proposing solutions. To my mind, that is what makes the prospect of a second statement on violence so challenging.

The purpose in raising the first two points is to highlight the need to dissuade people from participating in violent activities and supporting violent institutions. This is the more traditional role for such statements. There is a second purpose, however, which I think is even more important, served especially by the themes of the last four points. It is to persuade people that it is possible, by their collective action, to change the course of history and transform the traditional institutions of power into new forms which can solve conflicts without violence.

In the next few years, the need to combat the myths of violence is likely to increase rather than decrease. As the economic and political justifications for war and institutional violence become more and more difficult to rationally sustain, there will be a tendency for those with vested interests in the old system to fall back on their forms of justification, including the appeal to myths of "human nature," nationalist, religious and other justifications. There is an interesting

parallel to this analysis in the matter of racism, as described in a report to the 20th General Conference of UNESCO:

"...Racialism thus endeavors by usurping the authority of science, to provide racial discrimination...with a theoretical justification. When the falsity of its pseudo-scientific bases are exposed, it does not hesitate to fall back on other justifications such as divine purpose, cultural differences, or disparity in levels of education, and even goes so far as to invoke the social barriers between groups and the infrequency of intermarriage, for which it is itself largely responsible."

The proposals I am making here are made from a particular national and personal perspective, and must obviously be greatly modified and expanded in the course of development. From my perspective, they are in the spirit of the conclusion which we arrived at in Seville which I will paraphrase here:

We conclude that humanity is not condemned to war, and that we can be freed from the bondage of pessimism and empowered with confidence to undertake the transformative tasks needed in this International Year of Peace and in the years to come. Although these tasks are mainly institutional and collective, they also rest upon the consciousness of individual participants for whom pessimism and optimism are crucial factors. Just as ' wars begin in the minds of men,' peace also begins in our minds. The same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us.

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