

CHAPTER 7.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FIRST WORKSHOP

In common with other forms of intermediary process (mediation, conciliation, dialogues), a problem-solving *workshop* is usually triangular in structure. It brings together representatives of the adversary parties (the *participants*) in the presence of a third party (the *panel* of facilitators). There the resemblance ends. The problem-solving approach specifies that all parties must be present in the same place at the same time; message carrying by the third party is not sufficient. The talks must extend for a sufficiently long period to permit genuinely intensive discussion, which means that several days, or even weeks, may be necessary. The setting for the meeting must be one that is conducive to a thorough analysis, which implies that great care must be given to a whole range of details concerning the physical arrangements and their institutional context. Above all, the third-party 'panel' is a crucial element. In the problem-solving approach. It usually consists predominantly of academic researchers. Their selection and preparation is no less important than the invitations to the warring parties. Together, all these points imply that, to mount an effective problem-solving exercise, there must be a substantial background of administrative support.

1. The Organizational Background

Ideally, the administrative structure would be efficient, smooth running, adequately funded and expertly managed - in a word, professional. In fact, most of the problem-solving exercises undertaken by the Centre for the Analysis of Conflict and by other individuals and groups in the 1970s and 1980s were not professional at all, in the administrative sense. They were amateur operations, usually made possible only by the persistent enthusiasm of a few academics working on a part-time basis. Inevitably, technical hitches occurred, despite the flexibility and hard work of the secretarial and other supporting services that universities sometimes make available to their faculty members. In some ways a university environment is physically and socially attractive to the working participants. Many enjoy meeting students and recapturing the flavour of their own college days. But the need for the academic sponsors to fit their own timetables to the availability of participants, which is often subject to last-minute change, can be a serious problem.

Efficiency is, nevertheless, essential particularly in relation to one function during the run-up to the workshop: communication with the parties. Letters, faxes and e-mails must be answered immediately, phone calls made whatever the difficulties reaching the person requires, additional field trips made as and when changes in the conflict situation make them necessary. The ratio of time spent on preparatory efforts and actual 'workshop time' is often very high indeed, and there is no way in which this aspect of preparation can safely be cut down. The efficient flow of communication between party representatives and consultants is vital.

To achieve this in case after case in future, which is what must happen if the world's conflicts are not to continue to fester as they mostly have in the past, problem solving needs to be institutionalized. The institutionalization will need to develop within inherent logic of the approach, which requires that most elusive of qualities, true neutrality. Only in this way can *credibility* grow, so that the institution becomes permanently viable.

Neutrality, in this sense, means that an inspection of institution's previous record will not reveal any pattern of impact or effects that would allow a prediction to be made about a future outcome, other than general usefulness. Parties to any conflict are accustomed to deciding whether to go to court or to arbitration on the basis of a prediction that the result will be to *their* advantage. A sure sign of this is where a particular organization is repeatedly called in by one 'side' to a continual pattern of disputes.

However, it is important to make every effort to maintain credibility of both the consultants' parent organization and the process itself, and both of these can frequently be undermined by a failure to maintain commitments that have been made during initial approach to the parties. A particular problem is that of maintaining the essential *confidentiality* of the process, and it is a problem because, frequently, the parties themselves, or one of them, see an advantage in making it known that contacts are occurring, discussions planned or meetings taking place. This breaking of confidentiality is something that must be anticipated and prepared for, given the promises of discretion and confidentiality provided to parties and individuals relying on their maintenance.

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However, even while maintaining the necessary confidentiality, the amateur exercises that have led to the production of this Handbook can claim some measure of success. Their results and, in some cases, resolutions have been acceptable to all parties, nondirective and non-coercive. But it is also the case that their scale has been tiny and their achievements fragile. Their significance is only that they have shown what *could* be done. And it has to be faced that conflict resolution by problem solving is non-dramatic, incremental, slow and modest in every way. Change these properties, and the method will fail. And some of the world's chronic problems will continue.

It is not yet clear what form the perfectly functioning organizational structure would take; time and testing will have to determine that. But the image originally formed among pioneering conflict analysts was of a structure rather similar to that of a business management consulting group. There would be a team of qualified scholars as consultants in charge, supported by a secretariat with its own premises and necessary facilities. The team would be linked to the larger world of scholarship in relevant fields, perhaps with movement of individuals back and forth between the consulting group and the universities.

Each conflict analysis and resolution organization would have it) be generally acceptable to governments and to various international institutions, but not directly sponsored by them. The nature of any linkage between public authority and private consulting group would, therefore, raise ultra-sensitive problems, with many aspects to be worked out. And, of course, finance would be required, which constitutes a separate discussion.

Once a successful programme of institutionalization has been established, one issue will be raised in an acute form; the source of the financial support for any problem-solving institution. Inevitably, the view held by potential clients or users of both the problem-solving process and the institution practising it will be affected by what the users will see as one highly significant influence on the nature of the service provided: who controls those purse strings.

Even in the activities to date, it has been found that the issue of the source of operating funds is an important one, and on which frequently affects parties' initial reception of a approach and likely success in initiating a problem-solving exercise. 'Who is paying you for all this?' is always one of the first questions asked by leaders of parties in conflict when approached by members of the Centre. It is a question that has to be answered directly and promptly. In past exercises we have answered, accurately, that much of the funding for administrative and logistical support comes directly from the university while other charitable and educational foundations interested promoting peace and reconciliation, prominently the Society Friends, have given their support on an exercise-by-exercise basis. However, the question has alerted us to the dangers of being supported from government funds (which will give the impression that any proposal for a problem-solving exercise is merely another, if more subtle, attempt to further national interests) or by funding from foundations or other sources that have been associated, however innocently or indirectly, with activities that one or other of the parties to that particular conflict would regard as biased.

The issue of funds regarded as 'tainted' and funding source regarded as biased or manipulative is one that will arise in an even stronger form as the movement towards the institutionalization of conflict resolution and problem solving achieves some success, as began to happen in the 1980s and 1990s. To take one obvious example, if the United States Institute for Peace were to become associated with a problem-solving exercise, is it likely that USIP will, at least, be regarded as anything other than a branch of the US Government (which, of course, it is) necessarily pursuing America's interests? How might funding from Japanese or Australian sources, however disinterested, be regarded by parties to a conflict in Indonesia or the Philippines? What source of funding would be regarded as untainted by parties to any of the complex, interlocking conflicts in the Middle East?

Two major questions are posed by this issue of funding and there is no easy answer to either of them. The first is how those supplying funds for a conflict resolution 'institute' or 'bureau' will be viewed by potential clients, and what might be done to avoid the transference of any negative views from the funding source to the 'bureau'. The second, which we have not discussed because we have been fortunate in not encountering it, is to what extent reliance upon a major source of funding to establish a bureau will, indeed, affect the activities of that bureau - the cases it handles, its freedom of action, the type of outcome it might seek, its ability to take up a neutral stance in conflicts where popular feeling is strongly on one side of the dispute.

The only guideline derived from experience so far is for consultants to be extremely wary of their funding sources, to eschew government funding and to be completely open with parties in conflict about 'where the money comes from'. Any attempt at concealment of sources on the grounds that this might prejudice parties' reactions, followed by subsequent revelation, would be disastrous for the process, and not just for that particular exercise. The effects of Project Camelot should be kept firmly in mind.

2. The Setting of the Workshop

Wherever possible, consultants should be able to carry with them information about the what, when and where of the prospective workshop when they first journey to meet the potential party representatives; both the nature of the workshop and its context must be clearly worked out. This 'setting' of a workshop has importance on two levels. On the higher level, symbolic significance must be created. To do this, a meeting should be held under some distinguished institutional umbrella. The umbrella of a university can be valuable in conveying the sort of image that will encourage the parties to begin to think in problem-solving terms; research instead of polemics; analysis in place of rhetoric; communication rather than bargaining. The auspices of a known centre of learning can help to underline the distinction between a slanging match of many years' duration and a productive seminar which, in a few days, might open up options and possibilities not previously thought of.

On a practical level, the setting must be chosen in a way that fits the prescription implicit in one of the few safe generalizations known to social science: *that people tend, on the whole, to act out whatever role is appropriate to the situation*. If the situation is well designed, the role playing will be that which fits the problem solving method.

This means that the chosen *locale* should be physically apart from the location of the conflict and free of any association with any party to it. It means that *insulation* from the conflict is to be sought, so that the participants may feel themselves to be on an intellectual 'island'. The object is to find not merely the traditional mediator's 'neutral ground', but a setting in which the exercise seems remote - although not too remote - from the real world of international or intra-national conflict.

Often, finding an appropriate site is not an easy matter and the search for one is complicated by the fact that many countries will have taken a political position on the conflict under analysis, so that suggestions that a workshop might be held in country X often meet with the reply, from one or other party, that X has taken pro-adversary position or made negative comments - and hence that site would be inappropriate. Greece and Turkey would clearly be inappropriate places to hold a workshop on the Cyprus conflict, but so might Britain, a party to the Zurich Agreement and with unpopular military bases on the island, or the United States. On the other hand, we have found that part of making workshop participants feel comfortable and giving them a sense of safety and security (as well as 'distance'

from their conflict) involves putting them in a setting that feels culturally similar and somewhat familiar, perhaps with a common local language. The ideal is to create a sense of 'being at home' while not exactly being home; and mixing things familiar with others less familiar, yet interesting. Thus, in a curious way, a Cypriot workshop held in Britain would provide both sets of participants from the island with a sense of familiarity and some security, together with the important sense of being temporarily isolated from the day-to-day events of the conflicts on the island.

If these features can be achieved, they create an important *psychological boundary* between the workshop and the normal activities by which the participants engage in their conflict. The effect is that they are less likely to be accused of 'politicking' by their colleagues upon their return home, and they are less likely actually to engage in it. These considerations rule out a government office, a political headquarters, a court of law, an embassy, or even a metropolitan hotel. Instead, the library of a rural conference centre, the meeting room of a research institute, the boardroom of a philanthropic foundation or possibly the committee room of a famous hospital can all provide both the atmosphere and the connotations sought: professional concern, disinterested analysis, depth of discourse, seclusion, respect for information - in short, prestige of a non-political kind.

As a part of preparing an appropriate setting for the talks, the needs of those about to attend must also be kept in mind. Although there have been increasing opportunities for a few individuals to participate in workshops, dialogues or problem-solving exercises, it is unlikely that the participants in the planned workshop will have any very clear idea about what sort of a process they are about to participate in. Each may be puzzled and slightly apprehensive about what, and whom, they will confront in the forthcoming exercise. This is especially true in workshops that bring together parties that have been engaged in protracted and violent struggle leading to the demonization of the adversary and painfully high levels of hatred and mistrust. We have found it useful in past workshops, especially those that are the first of a planned series, to provide participants with some indication of the procedures in which they will be involved and of their own likely role in a problem-solving exercise. Thus, the invitations to individual participants have often contained some details about the forthcoming workshop, expressed in a positive and reassuring manner, but not minimizing the problems or the difficulties of the exercise for all those involved. Composing such an outline is often difficult, as the sensitivities and sensibilities of all those attending must be taken into account, and a balance struck between conveying the difficulties that will be confronted but also the excitement and the potential 'pay-offs' from involvement. Nonetheless, this is an unavoidable part of preparing for the workshop.

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3. Assembling the Panel

Whatever the organizational background and physical facilities for a workshop, no progress can be made without an effective third party – a facilitating panel to form the catalyst for interaction between the parties. Panelists have to be selected with deliberate care and they will need some degree of preparation for each workshop to which they are invited. They must possess certain personal and professional qualities. They must possess relevant knowledge. And they must know precisely what to expect when they attend the workshop, including what is expected of them.

3.1. The Qualities of the Panelists.

The personal and professional qualities needed can be separated into those which are necessary for participation in all workshops, and those that need to be considered in relation to the sensitivities of the parties within any particular workshop.

Generally desirable qualities all stem from the problem-solving theme, whereby conflict resolution, if it is to occur, is the product of thoughtful analysis. Every member of the panel, therefore, must be qualified, and seen to be so, in a relevant discipline. Institutional affiliation is, perhaps, the clearest indication of this; an imposing panel can include 'names' from several major universities, or reputable intermediary institutions. 'Names' in any other sense should be avoided, especially those of government 'in-and-outers'. However eminent a person may be in scholarly terms, he or she will frequently damage a workshop if he has seen recent government service, or similar service in support of any political group. His or her neutrality would be in question. Age and experience are also factors contributing to the professional aura of the panel. In many cultures, an experienced elder is often able to command respect by his very presence, whereas a panel comprised exclusively of 'whizz-kids' might have difficulty in creating the desired atmosphere.

But qualifications, age and experience all take second place to personality in the task of drawing up a list of panelists. The consultants must be people who know how to *listen*, and beyond that, know how to *hear* while they are listening. Intelligent, *constructive* interpretation of a statement is absolutely essential. This constitutes the greatest single drawback in an exclusive reliance of the approach on academic personnel. Academics are mostly people who earn their living by talking, often indeed by talking *down* to an audience. So the organizers must search for those relatively rare scholars who have a genuine commitment to a supportive, diagnostic, non-directive approach to group discussion. Such people can be found, and the experience of a single workshop will automatically expose an error of judgement in making a choice.

Within these general guidelines, a panel must be chosen to fit a *particular* workshop. Its composition must take at least some account of the prejudices and the delegational responsibilities of the party representatives - the participants. Whether or not the actual participants are themselves touchy or heavily biased, they are required to act on behalf of groups which may have distinct rules, habits and values of a cultural, racial, ideological or religious kind. Certainly, they will have overt political sensitivities, or there would be no need for a workshop. All of these factors

must be checked beforehand, and judgements must be made whether any one of them might cause a prospective panel member to be regarded as unacceptable. In practice, the effect of this is that many otherwise suitable panelists will be ruled out of a given workshop, not through any fault of their own, but through some inherent property like nationality, race or gender. We have often found it to be the unfortunate case that the perceived positions or biases of governments on particular conflicts 'rub off' on their nationals, who thus become identified with these, and are thus unacceptable as panel members. On one past occasion a great deal of time and effort had to be devoted to smoothing over the hostility evinced by Argentine participants towards United States panelists arising from the US government's ostensibly 'neutral' stance in a conflict where Argentine opinion had looked for US backing. Such problems are not infrequent and should be anticipated.

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It is worth noting that the judgements to be made here touch upon a fundamental problem in all the applied social sciences; *values and their role in political actions*. The organizers may be tempted deliberately to choose, or perhaps merely connive at the choice of, a person who in their moral judgement *ought* to be involved, whether the participants like it or not. This temptation ought to be suppressed. It is not the business of the consultants, *as such*, to deplore any one attitude or advocate another. To do so is to foment a separate conflict. That might well be a private moral imperative, but it is professionally unforgivable. The objective of the panel selection must be to find a group who will do their job well, while giving no offence by their person or their extra-workshop roles.

3.2. The Knowledge Base of the Panel.

Relevant knowledge, as distinct from status and qualifications, is also a property required of panelists. Again, the distinction can be drawn between the general and the particular.

The requisite general knowledge ideally combines theory with practical experience. An ideal panelist should have a comprehensive grasp of conflict theory, in addition to substantial experience of its application in problem-solving exercises. No such ideal person actually exists at the moment, although some individuals in the conflict research field have begun to approach these requirements in recent years, and more should become available as courses and colleges turn out a new, younger generation of trained specialists.

Fortunately, a workshop contains several consultants rather than a single mediator. This arrangement permits both a degree of specialization by field and some blending of experience with problem-solving innocence. The practice acknowledges both these principles, acknowledging the relative under-development of conflict analysis as a discipline, with panels drawing upon political scientists, specialists in industrial relations, economists and sociologists, and people with experience in using supportive techniques in social work, as well as the international relation analysts who have formed the core group. The common theme, heavily reinforced by the occasional experience of departing from it, is that all are behavioural scientists - scholars with an interest how people respond to their environment.

Another important quality of panelists is an ability to work together as a team and to form a harmonious and productive working relationship within the panel itself. A workshop is no place for *prima donnas*, particularly if the complex tasks involved in conducting a successful workshop are to be carried out successfully. Respect for others' views and ideas and a willingness to question one's own perceptions and assumptions, are qualities hoped for from participants but essential from the panel, if the latter are to work together as a team. Such qualities are enhanced among colleagues who have worked together previously in workshop settings and have learned to trust one another. Even so, we have found that it is helpful for the panel to prepare for workshop by having at least a two-day pre-planning session (which may well also involve other consultants who will not present in the actual workshop). In such meetings, the general outline of the week (or weeks) ahead can be considered, aims and objectives clarified, roles assigned, possibly relevant ideas theories discussed, and arrangements made for daily panel meetings to discuss progress, or lack of it, as the workshop progresses.

In several past exercises we have found it helpful to include number of panelists who play the peripheral but essential role of observers, rather than as central facilitators, who are responsible for the ongoing conduct of the workshop. In this role, special knowledge of the conflict and its environment can be brought to bear on the discussions by individual observers, who can note unexpected statements or reactions, subtle shifts of position, nuanced comments or coded messages being sent, and perhaps received, by participants. All members of a panel of facilitators are able to play this observer role to some degree - apart, perhaps from the chair or lead facilitator, whose task of guiding interaction usually occupies all that person's available time and attention. However, it is useful to find people with special knowledge of the conflict and ask them to observe the process, so that they can note their impressions of any important, if delicate changes during the workshop discussions, and feed them back the facilitators during the panel's regular evening debriefing and forward planning sessions.

As experience with conducting problem-solving exercises has increased, we have found it essential to appoint one or more individuals to the specific role of *exercise historian*, with the task of observing and recording the flow of events within the whole exercise process. This includes the preparations for and aftermath of the actual workshop, and, most importantly, the activities, ideas, reflections and suggestions of other exercise members, panelists as well as participants. Every member of a workshop panel tends to keep notes, but these are seldom enough to record and reconstruct an accurate and complete account of the detailed 'flow' of interactions within the exercise - reactions, turning points, changes of tone and pace, ideas that were dropped or lost, roads not taken. It has proved particularly important to have a record of 'out of workshop' discussions and debates about workshop strategies and the direction

of the next day's work, as well as about the development of a panel and of an overall 'workshop culture'. If no one is initially made responsible for such a 'process record', much of the work on the planning and later review sessions can be lost.

The planning sessions, in addition to the post-workshop meetings to analyse the results of the week, are essential for success. They are also time-consuming and demanding and underline again the stressful and exhausting nature of conducting the workshop for the panel. Workshops demand a great deal at an emotional and intellectual level of both participants and panellists, which is another reason for our requirement that each panelist possesses the ability to work as an equal member of a team, rather than as its dominant leader.

Finally, all panellists need to have *some degree* of knowledge of the conflict situation to be discussed. But only some. On this point, both pure theory and the fruits of experience produce a counter-intuitive stipulation. A thorough knowledge of the area, its history, economy, politics and culture could actually be harmful - personal likes and dislikes of local personalities even more so. The reason for this is that the panelists are not there to instruct the participants on facts and figures or dates and laws, or even causes and effects. They are there to help the analysis of the conflict. Analysis requires data and *the data consist mainly and most importantly of the perceptions and experiences of the parties 'represented' by the participants present at the workshop*. By definition, the perceptions of the two sides will differ in any conflict. For the panel to contrive a third 'correct' perception would only add another, somewhat trivial, party to that conflict. Problem solving seeks to analyse and resolve a conflict, *not* to extend its scope.

On the other hand, the panelists do require a sufficient familiarity with the situation to enable them to avoid embarrassment and to ask pertinent questions. There is, consequently, an optimum information level for the panel in respect of each exercise, and we have found that the procedure of judging its scope and content is quite manageable on a case-by-case, commonsense basis. The necessary factual information can form part of the briefings that should precede the opening of the workshop. Journalists, diplomats or other practitioners, and academic regional experts or field specialists can all be helpful in providing the relevant background. The aim might be characterized as the cultivation of an 'innocent' eye that enables one to ask searching, fundamental questions rather than 'ignorant' ones.

4. A Re-analysis of Available Information

At the final, pre-workshop stage, then, it is important to make serious efforts to revise one's original assessment of the conflict made in the earlier stages of the problem-solving exercise. Preliminary data will already have been gathered in preparation for the field trips necessary to interest parties to the conflict in the possibility of holding an exercise and to make preliminary arrangements for holding a workshop. To this will have been added data gathered from these direct contacts with leaders and from other sources, some listed above. The process of *improving the quality of data* about the conflict is, of course, a continuous one and one pre-eminently carried out *during* the workshop. But the final preparation stage is an appropriate point in the overall process to re-analyse available data to obtain some preliminary estimate of *the structure of the issues in the' conflict*, the manner in which these have changed over time and the range of acceptable 'solutions' envisaged by the adversaries.

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Whenever possible, therefore, the consultants and the panel should devote some time to considering what they think they have learned so far about the conflict, to re-analysing its main features, and cautiously to begin to make a preliminary assessment of the nature of the issues and problems likely to arise during the actual workshop. At this stage, they can also attempt to fill in gaps in the knowledge they feel they require about the conflict by talking informally with representative members of the parties in conflict, whenever such persons are available, in order to obtain missing data - but particularly to gain some empathy for the perceptions and emotions of those actually involved in the dispute. Once again, this process needs to be carried out in a tentative fashion and it is vital that consultants should avoid forming an inflexible picture of 'What the conflict is *actually* about'. There will be many views about this among the parties themselves and even more among outsiders. Members of 'diasporas', distant from the actual arena in which the conflict is being pursued, often tend to possess more extreme views and positions than those directly involved in, and knowledgeable about, the conflict, and bearing its costs directly. Hence, our initial rule also applies at this stage to any re-analysis of the conflict; be cautious in believing that one has accurate picture of the complexities of the conflict and be prepared to revise this picture the nearer one comes to those directly involved in prosecuting the struggle.

SEE EXERCISE 7.5

5. Preliminary Preparations

With all the preparations complete, the consultants are free attend to the *intellectual* management of the forthcoming work shop. The visiting panellists should, by this stage, be integrated into a team with the sponsoring consultants. The team can begin planning the strategy and tactics that will extend throughout the workshop and beyond, into the follow-up phase.

A chair or lead facilitator needs to be appointed, at least for opening session; later the role can rotate. Tentative decisions have to be made about introductory techniques and lines of discussion to be interposed at various critical

stages. There can be a preliminary division of roles among the panelists, so that each has a number specific tasks and, when the occasion arises, can introduce different ideas, or bodies of theory. Some panelists use blackboards or flip charts while others do not, but their interventions should generally conform to some coherent - and eventually familiar - pattern. One common sign of success in getting participants to adopt analytical as opposed to belligerently partisan roles is when they begin draw on blackboards or flip charts!

Known foibles and proclivities of the participants can be considered, so that ways can be worked out to anticipate an perhaps forestall wholly disruptive or negative contributions.

None of this amounts to anything as tight as a formal agenda nor should it constitute manipulation of the participants. Good preparation should produce an adaptable set of guidelines which ensure that the workshop is kept on track, with the parties' representatives engaging in a flow of communication which, with the help of the panelists, will enable them to find *their own route* towards a resolution of their conflict.

EXERCISE 7.1: Maintaining Confidentiality.

Background Discussion

One of the continuing dangers in the preparations stage of many workshops is that the fact of its taking place at all may, of itself, become part of the bargaining and manoeuvring that parties continue, even during de-escalation and discussions stages of the conflict. This is especially the case in situations where one or other of the parties has committed itself to '... no talks with the enemy unless ...'; or where there is strong internal opposition to contacts with an adversary seen as evil and utterly uncompromising.

In such circumstances, the consultants' guarantee of confidentiality may be particularly important in ensuring that the problem-solving exercise, or a particular workshop, takes place at all. Frequently, the possibility that their own intra-party opposition, their rank and file supporters, 'hawks' within the adversary, or the 'world at large' will learn about the holding of even an informal, academic set of discussions, will cause leaders to back away from the contacts, thus causing a major dilemma for the third party. This possibility has to be anticipated and planned for.

Exercise Scenario

In spite of numerous difficulties, you have finally managed to persuade the President of the Etrurian Regional Government to give his approval for the holding of a small, problem-solving workshop on the Lusitanian/Etrurian problem purely '...as an experiment and to help you in your research...' to quote the President's confidential letter of acceptance. However, you know that he, and the other leaders of the constitutionalist parties in Etruria, are highly sensitive about their participation, given the terms of the Alva Accord. It is also clear that they are under some pressure from the leaders of the ADL, their partners in the Etrurian Region's coalition Government, not even to attend such discussions.

It is also clear that the leaders of PAVE are more than pleased to come to a workshop and that they regard this meeting in some ways as a preliminary step towards the ending of their political isolation in Etruria. You have emphasized to them, as well as to the other parties, that the discussions, and the fact that they will take place, will be confidential and that participants will attend as individuals and not as formal representatives of any political parties or governments.

Moreover, as you have explained, the workshop is a wholly 'academic' exercise and will imply no question of recognition of the legitimacy of their position on the conflict or of POME, the guerilla organization to which they are said to be closely linked.

Finally, you have emphasized that, as the workshop is unofficial and academic, it will have no effect on the continuing ban on formal contacts with PAVE contained in the Alva Accord although, you have added, a successful workshop may lead towards a reconsideration of the central provisions of that Accord.

Exercise Task

Two weeks after receiving the final agreement to attend from the participants suggested by the main parties within Etruria, and four weeks before the opening date of the workshop, a colleague in Etruria faxes you a short article that has appeared on an inside page of *Combat*, the weekly journal that espouses the cause of Etrurian separatism and is usually regarded as the mouthpiece of PAVE.

The article is headlined 'The Meeting That Will Never Take Place' and discusses the set of then confidential workshops held several years ago on the Cyprus conflict by the Canadian Centre for Peace and Security Studies, which led to the establishment of a joint Turkish-Greek Cypriot Planning Committee to suggest ways of encouraging functional integration on the island of Cyprus. It then goes on to speculate about the value of such meetings for the parties in Etruria '... at the present stage of the struggle ...', and outlines the details of a 'future scenario ...' for a workshop series (parties attending, possible participants, agenda items), which is so close to what you are planning that it is clear that somebody has been leaking details of the workshop to *Combat*.

It is only possible to speculate about the source of the leak and what their intentions are (to wreck the workshop, or to gain maximum political advantage from its taking place, or ... ?) but the immediate problem is the effects such an article is likely to have both on your own guarantee of confidentiality to all the parties and the participants, and on the willingness of the already 'jumpy' leaders of the constitutionalist parties to attend the planned workshops.

What do you do?

EXERCISE 7.2: Inviting the Participants.

Background Discussion.

For most workshops, preliminary contacts with the parties finally result in a formal letter of invitation from the consultant's organization (not the leadership of the parties involved) to each of the individual participants. The letter stresses, among other things, that each will attend as an individual and not as a formal representative, and outlines administrative, travel and logistical arrangements for the workshop.

While the latter details are important, another major part of the letter of invitation is an attempt to set out some information about the nature of a problem-solving workshop and what the participants, who are unlikely ever to have attended such an exercise, can expect during the four to five days that they will be closeted with members of the enemy, and a somewhat mysterious entity called a 'panel'.

Partly, the purpose of this information is simply to prepare the participants and to lay down some groundrules for the meeting and for the after-the-workshop period; but it is also partly to provide some reassurance for the participants that they are not going to take part in some 'experiment', or have their confidence abused, or be exposed to any dangers during or after the exercise. The outline needs to be brief but clear, the tone to be reassuring, and the whole composition to be open about what is likely to happen during the week.

What consultants need to try to avoid is any participant saying indignantly in the final session: 'I did not expect this sort of thing to happen to me!'

Exercise Scenario

You have managed to convince both the President of Zandia and the leaders of the ALF to give their approval for the first of what you hope will be a series of three or four problem-solving workshops on the Zandian/ALF conflict, although both leaderships still remain sceptical.

Both the Zandian President's Office and the ALF Representative in Washington have provided you with a list of suggested participants for the first workshop, most of whom, to your relief, are neither formal members of the Zandian Government or bureaucracy, nor officials within the ALF.

You know that all the individuals on the lists have been alerted by the ALF and the Government that your Centre at the University of Umea 'may' be getting in touch with them to participate in a workshop and that '... this is alright, at least until we see what is involved in such an exercise ...'

Exercise Task

YOU have been through the list of individuals suggested by the two sides and have selected three possible participants to represent the Government's position and three to represent the ALF's views, aspirations and objectives.

There has been some question about whether your Centre should passively accept the principle of taking participants from a list supplied by the two rival sets of leaders, or whether you should take two from each list and then seek a third 'outsider'. This still remains an issue on your Planning Committee.

However, the immediate task is that of writing a letter of invitation to the chosen participants, outlining both the administrative arrangements (site, date, travel and accommodation arrangements, panel, etc.) but, more importantly, explaining to the participants just what sort of an event they are being invited to. All are familiar with debates, with formal conferences and with law courts. None know anything at all about collaborative problem-solving workshops or facilitated discussions.

Write a first draft of the letter of invitation.

EXERCISE 7.3: Preparing the Panel.

Background Discussion

Even when acceptances to a workshop have been received and other logistical arrangements (finance, site, travel, accommodation) concluded, much planning and preparation remains to be done.

Much thought has to be given to the assembling and preparation of a panel of facilitators, who will have to work together throughout the workshop, often for long hours and under much stress. The panel has to work as a well-integrated team of facilitators, not as single individuals. The general objectives of the workshop have to be agreed and a tentative, flexible agenda prepared for presentation to participants on the first day of the discussions. Roles must be agreed and assigned, review procedures for each evening set in place, and decision processes agreed.

Exercise Scenario

YOU have succeeded in persuading both the rival leaderships of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities on the island of Cyprus to support an unofficial, five-day workshop to be held at your university-based research centre in Sweden, to analyse current relationships on the Island' and to 'explore new options for moving towards a resolution of the dispute'.

The Greek Cypriot Government has insisted that this is an informal, 'academic' and completely unofficial meeting, while the representative of the President of the (unrecognized) 'Turkish Republic of North Cyprus' (TRNC), who finally gave you his assent, tried very hard to get you to agree to making this a discussion between 'representatives of the two governments'.

Four individuals, two Greek Cypriot and two Turkish Cypriot, nominated by their respective leaderships as being able to 'represent the interests and aspirations of the two communities on the Island of Cyprus ...' (a quote from your letter of invitation), will arrive at your Centre in Umea north of Stockholm in four days time. The older Greek Cypriot representative is a retired diplomat who was deputy head of the Cypriot delegation to the UN until 1986; the younger is the vice-principal of the Nicosia Technical College and has been active in the cause of women's rights among the Greek Cypriot community. On the Turkish Cypriot side there are a younger businessman, who is a personal friend of the President of the TRNC, and a member of the President's personal staff, known to be a 'hardliner'.

Exercise Task

Apart from your (three) selves, you have invited a well-known academic facilitator from the University of Waterside, Ontario, to be a member of your facilitating panel. Professor X, who holds an appointment as a Professor of Psychiatry at his university, has a great deal of experience in facilitated processes and analytical problem solving, but has a firm belief in the appropriateness of his own, rather structured model of a 'workshop' based upon ideas derived from the NTL approach, T-Group theories and the work of Carl Rogers and Leonard Doob. In contrast, your fifth panel member has experience in labour-management negotiations but has proved very flexible when you have worked with him in the past. You feel, however, that you need a sixth member of the panel to complete the team.

At the moment, you seem to face two major problems about the panel and the planning of the workshop:

- (1) What sort of person do you think would be most appropriate to form a sixth member of the facilitating team, and what major roles should all six members take during the opening days of the discussion? How do you plan to arrange this with the other three members of the team when they arrive tomorrow? How do you plan to review the working of the team during the course of the workshop?
- (2) What do you hope to achieve from the workshop, what will be your underlying plan for conducting it, and what sort of an agenda/order of business do you propose to present to the participants on Monday's opening session?

However, just as the Planning Committee is about to meet to discuss these issues, another matter arises that demands the immediate attention of Committee members:

You have received a telephone call from the local representative of BBC Television, who has somehow got wind of the meeting and would like 'to interview some of the members of the workshop', both before it starts and after it ends. Your Administrative Director has promised to call him back later today with an answer to his request.

Make recommendations for dealing with each of these issues.

EXERCISE 7.4: Reviewing the Data.

Background Discussion

Once initial contacts with the parties have been made directly, the proposal for a workshop put and accepted and preparations for the workshop put in hand, consultants should (whenever possible in conjunction with all the panel members) review the information they have gathered during the previous diagnostic and contact stages.

The objective should be to fill in and summarize, in a highly tentative fashion, the information about the structure of the conflict gained so far and to highlight information that is still lacking and which might only become available during the interaction between participants in the actual workshop.

Tentatively, consultants could now begin to put together a preliminary picture of the main issues in the conflict and the way in which these are defined and evaluated by the parties themselves.

Exercise Task

Using the list of key questions developed in Exercise 5.3, develop a preliminary analysis of the conflict chosen for a problem-solving exercise. Assess and note particularly the quality and reliability of available data and those aspects of the conflict where data is currently sparse or unreliable.

Make two tentative lists of the 'key' issues in the conflict as perceived by both sides, attempting to put these into central and peripheral categories for each of the adversaries. Use these lists to begin to construct a classification scheme for types of issues encountered in this conflict and possibly to be met in future, similar types of dispute.

EXERCISE 7.5: Increasing Empathy for all Parties.

Background Discussion.

Gathering and interpreting data *at a distance* about a complex and intense interaction such as a protracted and deep-rooted conflict can only, at best, give a uni-dimensional insight into the nature of the problem about to be approached. At worst, it will entirely leave out people's feelings and emotions, their commitments and aspirations, their hopes and fears, save in the most bloodless fashion. At best, such analysis will provide only a partial insight into what often proves to be key data in understanding, analysing and helping to resolve the conflict.

This type of psychological data is, in our experience, best revealed during the interaction of the workshop itself and there the effects can sometimes be shattering for participants who are not prepared for the levels of emotion that can be generated in such a setting. It is important, therefore, to do something to try to prepare panel members for this affective aspect of the conflict they are helping parties to resolve, quite apart from the instrumental or informational side of the dispute.

One way of carrying out such preparation is to undertake interviews with committed and partisan members of parties in conflict, partly to add to the set of data about the origins, history and key issues in the dispute, but also to obtain some empathy for the psychological and emotional dimensions of that conflict, which in themselves are important data for conflict analysis.

Exercise Task

Devise an open-ended interview schedule (a list of questions) for use with respondents who are members of the parties in the conflict which is the subject of the problem-solving exercise planned by your group of consultants.

Compare the questions with the original list of key questions developed in the earlier Exercise [5.3.] designed to obtain factual information about the conflict under analysis.

Carry out at least one interview with a member of the parties to the dispute, record the data obtained from such interviews and extract what you consider to be the most important findings about the conflict derived from this/these interview(s). Compare the data gained from this type of analysis with that gained through other forms of preliminary diagnosis.