Comment:
Is There A Behavioral Science Solution?

Donald W. Cole *

"I like to believe that people in the long run are going to do more to promote Peace than are governments. Indeed I think that people want peace so much that one of these days governments had better get out of their way and let them have it."

... Dwight Eisenhower, 1959

We must learn how to all live together on this planet. Or, with the proliferation of nuclear weapons, we will most surely all die together on this planet. Peace and non-violent conflict resolution must become everyone’s business. There is an ultra left wing (PLO, IRA, ANC) position which maintains that if you do not believe as I believe, you must be silenced or killed. And, there is an ultra right wing conservative (death squads in Central America, KKK and Nazi remnant groups in the U.S.A.) position which maintains that if you do not believe as I believe, you must be silenced or killed.

We tried an economic solution over Afghanistan without much success. And, American farmers were badly hurt. We tried an economic solution over Libya but none of our allies would back us. So, in our frustration and anger over the terrorists bombing of a Berlin night club and the death of one American soldier (now two), we bombed Libya. And, what was the result? We lost an F-111 and two highly trained American officers. Was the bombing worth the loss of these two Americans to avenge the loss of two Americans in Berlin? Was it worth the cost of all the others who will now die as world terrorism escalates?

It is well known in military circles that you can not bomb a nation into submission. We are told that in Germany after all the bombings of World War II, military production was higher at the end of the war than at the beginning. In North Vietnam we dropped 2 1/2 times more bombs than we dropped on Germany in all of World War II. And, North Vietnam still won the war. Does bombing help?

The bombing of Libya cost us the support of our allies while the Arab world rallied to the support of Libya. Would this have happened without the bombing? From a diplomatic perspective, was the bombing worth it?

Does anyone believe that this act of American "terrorism" and the killing of Libyan civilians is likely to reduce world terrorism? The World sees a nation of 250 million people with the most modern military equipment bombing a poorly equipped nation of 3 million. Would you stop your terrorism if you were in their position or would you redouble your efforts? Does anyone still remember how World War I started? Does anyone still remember what happened when we tried to use military force and the Marines to solve the problems in Lebanon? Does anyone still remember how all that ended?

The bombing of Libya is estimated to have cost at least $48 million (Cleveland Plain Dealer, 4/21/86). Was this a wise expenditure of taxpayer money? We might have done a lot more to reduce terrorism if we had spent these dollars on a hospital or an irrigation project. We claim to be a Christian nation but we do not seem to practice much Christianity in our foreign policy. We try to impose our rules on the world through military might. But, the World has different rules and our differences need to be discussed. Whoever bombed the night club in Berlin was trying to give the World a message of some kind. And, terrorism is likely to continue until we understand the message and deal with it in some more rational way than with more terrorism. Because, more and more terrorism will eventually lead to nuclear war. The attempt to use terrorism and bombings and "gun boat diplomacy" in this day and age is the result of frightened frustrated minds functioning at a low level of creativity. We need to develop some innovative Behavioral Science solutions for dealing with this kind of regional cultural unhappiness.

But, we feel we must do something! The World seems to be moving more and more quickly from one major crisis to another. The U.S. is giving nuclear technology to Pakistan. When Pakistan gets nuclear bombs, it is widely expected that these will be given to Libya and Iran. And, we do not have much time before this happens. As Albert Einstein said following the explosion of the A-bomb at Hiroshima, "Now everything has changed except our manner of thinking. Thus we are drifting toward a catastrophe beyond comparison. We shall require a new manner of thinking if mankind is

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to survive. "We need the technology for resolving large scale conflict in non-violent ways. We need a Behavioral Science "Manhattan Project".

In an effort to understand all these problems, I recently:

- went to Nicaragua (2/5-15/85) and visited the war zone where I looked into the eyes of women and children whose husbands and fathers had been killed by U.S. funded Somoza National Guard troops called “Contras”. Nicaragua is a very poor country with a population of only 3 million (about the same as Greater Philadelphia) half of whom are under the age of 15. We saw no military objectives. But, in an effort to force a military solution, contra troops with U.S. support murder and torture innocent farm families and school teachers.

- went to Torgau, East Germany for the reunion of Soviet and American War Veterans on the Elbe River and the 40th Anniversary Journey for Peace (4/20-5/3/85). This was a meeting of Soviet and American War Veterans who 40 years ago took “The Oath of the Elbe” that they would do all in their power to prevent another war from happening.

- visited Moscow (4/29/85) with a resolution passed unanimously by Cleveland City Council authorizing me to begin negotiations on the development of a Partner Cities Project between Cleveland and a city in the Soviet Union.

- walked in the cold on Mamayev Hill (5/1/85) where some 800,000 Soviets and 1.2 million Germans died in the Battle for Stalingrad. And at a banquet that evening honoring Soviet and American War Veterans, proposed a World Peace Congress in 1987 and joint Peace research with the Soviets. (Muzafer and Carolyn Sherif found in their famous study on a Connecticut farm that the best way for reducing tensions between rival groups was to get people working together on projects which neither group could accomplish alone. I believe that World Peace is such a project.) [Sherif, Muzafer, “Experiments on Group Conflict and Cooperation” in Harold J. Leavitt and Louis R. Pondy (eds.) Readings in Managerial Psychology, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.]

- took an International Consulting Team of Behavioral Scientists to Poland (6/10-14/85) for discussions with representatives of the Polish Government on the situation there.

- helped organize the 5th O.D. World Congress (6/18-22/85) in Zeist, The Netherlands with Behavioral Scientists from all over the World.

- visited South Africa (10/17-11/10/85) and Louw DuToit, RODC, a white South African, who sold his beach home to develop a multi-racial training program for community leaders on how to achieve non-violent large systems change; met with Thami Siluma, the elected Black Mayor of Katlehong (a black township of 500,000 just outside Johannesburg) who has twice had his home fire-bombed by black terrorists but like Martin Luther King, Jr., continues to work for non-violent change; and met with Jacob, a black community leader with the Xitsonga Tribe who is subject to black terrorist reprisals but writes me, “... it seems that violence and anarchy talk louder than disciplined community management and constitutional growth. I refuse to talk to the World through the blood of my brothers, but I will be grateful if you can talk to the World through the mouth and testimony of my friends, my friends like you ... Dr. Cole.”

Our continuing efforts to work on these problems include:

- having written to many of the major Behavioral Science organizations in the World asking if they would organize a Committee on Non-Violent Large Systems Change.

- invited everyone interested to an interdisciplinary, inter-organizational team meeting on Non-Violent Large Systems Change that was held May 11-12, 1987 on the Lake Geneva Campus of George Williams College in Williams Bay, Wisconsin (just outside Chicago).

- took an International Consulting Team of Behavioral Scientists to South Africa (8/11-31/86) for a multi-racial conference on “Alternatives to Violence: How to Phase Out Apartheid without Destroying Families”. We plan to take another team in February of 1988.

- held the 6th O.D. World Congress just outside Jerusalem (11/17-21/86) on “Managing Conflict in
the 1990's. An effort was made to bring both Arabs and Jews to this World Congress so that learnings would not be just theoretical but experiential as well.

• planning the 7th O.D. World Congress in Poland (9/22-28/87) so we can meet and talk with scientists from Eastern Block nations. Anyone interested is invited to attend and to make a presentation.

• planning a World Peace Congress in the Soviet Union (9/28-10/3/87) to discuss World Peace and joint Peace research with the Soviets.

It is time to organize an inter-disciplinary, inter-organizational Behavioral Science "Manhattan Project" that would develop the technology for non-violent conflict resolution and non-violent large systems change. You can help by:

• letting us know if this interests you and then coming to one of the meetings listed above so that we can benefit from your ideas.

• writing the professional associations of which you are a member and asking them to organize an official Committee on Non-Violent Large Systems Change so that we can begin to tap these important resources. Efforts to find non-violent alternatives have up to now been terribly fragmented.

• writing your ideas on "A Behavioral Science Solution" in 10 double spaced pages or less for possible publication in The Organization Development Journal. We also accept Letters to the Editor. Please note whether we can or can not publish.

• participating financially. Associate Member $10 (for 4 newsletters). Full Member $100. Patron $1,000 (to help send a Behavioral Scientist to a troubled spot). Sponsor $5000 (to help hire secretarial assistance).

Ideas, comments and contributions can be sent to: The O.D. Institute, 6501 Wilson Mills Road, Suite K, Cleveland, Ohio 44143 USA. Telephone: 216/461-4333. Contributions are income tax deductible.