



# BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS THE GREEN LINE

A GUIDE TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN CYPRUS

**Benjamin J Broome**  
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In this guidebook, Benjamin Broome explores the dynamics of intercultural communication in unofficial contacts across the Green Line in Cyprus. The book begins with an overview of efforts over the past three decades to promote cooperation across the buffer zone, with an examination of the obstacles confronted by those involved in these projects. Drawing from bi-communal workshops he has facilitated during the past decade, the author describes the images, both positive and negative, that each side holds of the other, helping the reader recognize the differences that divide the communities, while appreciating the commonalities that bind Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots together. He provides a revealing look at issues of identity, showing how they are intricately tied to the conflict that divides the communities. Practical suggestions are made for establishing trust, engaging in dialogue, and working together on joint projects. Finally, he discusses the social and psychological impact of cross-community contact and its importance in preparing for life after a settlement. Designed for anyone who wishes to understand the challenges and the promises of communication across the Green Line, it will be useful for novices and veterans alike, outside third-parties working in Cyprus, and the serious traveler who seeks to comprehend the complexity of bi-communal relations on this conflict-divided eastern Mediterranean island.

Benjamin Broome is a professor of communication at Arizona State University in the USA. During the last decade he has facilitated workshops, training programs, and seminars with community groups, NGOs, and project teams in Cyprus, focusing on intercultural communication, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution.



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with the Green line dividing the city.

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Most of all, I want to thank my Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot friends and colleagues who participated in the bi-communal workshops that took place during my stay in Cyprus from 1994-1996 and who have provided leadership for the bi-communal activities over the last decade. It was from them that I learned the difficulties and rewards of building bridges across the Green Line. If others find this guidebook useful, the credit goes to these courageous and committed individuals, who are the true 'pioneers' in building the future of Cyprus.

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# PREFACE

For more than a decade there have been sustained attempts by Cypriots from both communities to promote contact and cooperation across the Buffer Zone (referred to as the ‘Green Line’) that has divided Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots from one another for over three decades. Commonly known as ‘bi-communal activities,’ these efforts have ranged from intensive conflict resolution workshops to academic seminars, panel discussions, cultural events, environmental projects, summer camps and other youth gatherings, and receptions to commemorate special holidays of various diplomatic entities. The bi-communal activities have been locally driven, but in many cases they required the logistical assistance of third-parties, and in some cases they were facilitated by outside trainers and other technical experts. For the most part, these events provided the only way for Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots to meet one another in Cyprus.

In recent months, however, major developments have taken place in Cyprus that significantly affect contacts between the

communities and the role of bi-communal activities in promoting these links. The first of these developments occurred in April 2003, when the restrictions that had long prevented communication and contact across the Buffer Zone were partially lifted, allowing for the first time in nearly thirty years ordinary Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots to visit one another in their homes, sit together in coffee shops and restaurants, shop in one another's stores, and work together on a limited basis<sup>1</sup>.

A second major development occurred in December 2003, when elections in the north brought to power a pro-rapprochement party that views inter-communal contacts favourably. A long-held stance by Turkish-Cypriot officials against inter-communal contacts was removed, and for the first time the Turkish-Cypriot authorities voiced their support for cooperation with the other side. Many of the individuals who played a leading role in the rise of pro-solution parties in the north have participated actively in the bi-communal activities over the years, and several have indicated that the co-existence stance they advocate was developed as a result of the opportunities they had to engage in intense discussions and dialogues with Greek Cypriots about the core issues of the Cyprus problem. Their ascent to positions of influence has drastically lowered (but probably not eliminated entirely) the social pressure and media criticisms that 'bi-communalists' have long experienced in the north.

The most recent development, and perhaps the one with the most serious long-term consequences, occurred on 24 April 2004. United Nations-sponsored negotiations were restarted in January 2004, with agreement from leaders of the two communities that a version of the 'Annan Plan,' which had originally been the focus of negotiations in 2003, would be submitted to separate referenda in each community. Upon acceptance by voters in both communities, the plan would take effect on 1 May 2004, the day that Cyprus was scheduled to become a full member state of the European Union (EU), allowing Cyprus to enter the EU as a unified state. While the

Turkish Cypriots voted heavily in favour of the Annan Plan, the Greek Cypriots overwhelmingly rejected the plan, thus preventing it from taking effect. This negative vote on the part of the Greek Cypriots not only made it less likely that a political agreement would be reached in the near future, but it led to a great deal of discouragement among those involved in the peace process, including both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots who had worked so hard and for so many years in the interests of rapprochement. Hopes for large-scale cooperation between communities were dashed, and the individuals and groups working for reconciliation had to re-group and re-think their strategy.

At the time of this writing, it is difficult to know what will happen next, either with the prospects for a political agreement or with the future of bi-communal efforts on the island. However, one thing is clear – the dynamics of inter-communal relations have been changed irrevocably by the recent developments. Even without a political settlement, it is unlikely that the Green Line will ever again function as an impenetrable wall between the two communities. Thousands of individuals will continue to cross the line on a daily basis, some to work or seek services, others to shop, eat, visit friends, or take excursions. With or without a solution, it is likely that joint projects dealing with infrastructure, environment, education, and health will go forward, and joint business ventures will become more common.

Face-to-face communication with members of the other community is now an unavoidable reality for many in Cyprus, from the shopkeepers on Ledra Street, to the doctors and nurses at Nicosia General hospital, the waiters in Kyrenia and Bellapais, the taxi drivers in both communities, and the Cypriot general public. Individuals who might never have considered taking part in third-party organized bi-communal activities are confronted with the need to interact with ‘the other.’ Economic and practical incentives for cooperation drive cross-community contacts, and many opportunities are developing for joint projects across a wide spectrum of society.

On the surface, it may appear to outsiders, or even to ordinary Cypriots, that there is no ‘communication problem’ between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. After all, when people get together, they get along well, often enjoying each other’s company. And since the checkpoints were opened, there have been no serious incidents of violence or other problems to indicate that the two communities are unable to get along. However, for the vast majority of Cypriots crossing the Green Line or meeting visitors from the other side, the conversation has never moved beyond a surface level. Cypriots of both communities tend to exhibit a politeness toward strangers, and their cordiality can go a long way toward smooth relations – as long as interaction stays within ‘safe’ topics. Yet the burden of the Cyprus conflict remains over everyone’s head, and sitting in a coffee shop on the other side enjoying a leisurely Sunday afternoon does little to remove the weight of living in a divided country. And carrying on a casual conversation is very different from working together on a daily basis, struggling with disagreements and managing conflicts productively.

Unfortunately, few people understand well (if at all) the views of the other community, and many people hold misleading images about the other side. It is inevitable that people will experience difficulties, and without adequate knowledge, such incidents can easily spiral into negative consequences. In order for interaction to be effective and for joint projects to work smoothly, it is important for those involved to understand more about the dynamics of intercultural communication, to learn more about the ‘reality’ of the other community, and to be able to ‘process’ their experiences within a framework that helps them work through the confusion and uncertainty that inevitably accompanies such contact.

There is no ‘secret formula’ that guarantees successful encounters across the Green Line, but there is much wisdom that can be gained from the experiences of those who have been involved in such encounters for the past decade. In addition, there is a large body of literature about intercultural communication, and although every

situation is different, there are some basic guiding principles that govern fruitful cross-cultural interaction. This guidebook is designed to share the wisdom of those who have already travelled along the bi-communal road and to suggest ways to maximize the inter-communal experience. It should be useful to anyone involved in cross-community contacts, from experienced bi-communalists to those new to inter-communal relations. I also hope it will be helpful for the third parties and other members of the international community working with Cypriots, outsiders living in Cyprus, and to Greek and Turkish organizations that have relations with Cypriot NGOs, businesses, and other groups.

A Turkish-Cypriot official recently stated: ‘The days of intercultural conflict are giving way to an era of intercultural cooperation.’<sup>2</sup> For much too long Cypriots have been concerned primarily with the conflict. Now it is time to shift the focus toward learning more about cooperation and consensus building. Cyprus and its people cannot afford to remain stuck in a painful and dysfunctional past. It is time to move toward the future and join the multicultural world of which all Cypriots are members.

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<sup>1</sup> The easing of restrictions on crossing the Green Line was noteworthy for several reasons. First, the decision to allow contact on such a grand scale took nearly everyone by surprise. The relaxation of restrictions seemed to go against a decades-old policy by the Turkish-Cypriot leadership, which had restricted most forms of contact between the two communities, and which for several years had enforced what amounted to a ‘ban’ on meetings by bi-communal groups. Neither the diplomatic community nor the Greek-Cypriot authorities had anticipated a move to ease the restrictions, and the citizen peace groups in both communities were not optimistic about severe limitations on contact being removed before a solution. Second, the response of the people in Cyprus to the new ‘freedoms’ was more positive than expected. The procedures included a requirement (now lifted) for Greek Cypriots to show their passport when crossing to the north, and it was assumed by most people that the majority of Greek Cypriots would refuse to ‘recognize’ the Turkish-Cypriot regime by presenting this document at the checkpoint. Yet, the rush to cross the Green Line started almost the moment the new rules went into effect, and traffic has been steady since, with more than half the population of the island going to the other side at least once, many on a regular basis. Third, the long-held fear that inter-communal hostilities would start again once people could travel freely was dispelled. Fortunately, there have been no extreme acts of violence, and while relations are far from normalized, the contacts have gone smoothly, particularly in light of the propaganda within each community over the years that promoted negative images of the other side.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Hasan Alicik, head of the Turkish-Cypriot Educational Planning and Programme Development department, as quoted in the *Cyprus Mail*, Thursday, July 15, 2004.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

In May 1994, I travelled to Cyprus for the first time, entering a world that for me was simultaneously both familiar and strange. Fourteen years earlier I had spent a year teaching at the American College of Greece, and in the meantime I had returned to Greece and the Aegean numerous times. So stepping off the plane and seeing signs written in the Greek script, catching a glimpse of the shimmering Mediterranean sea, and feeling the hot sun blazing down from a deep blue sky made me feel right at home. However, it was soon apparent that I was no longer in Greece. Just outside the airport stood a strikingly beautiful mosque, situated on the shores of the Larnaca salt lake. Driving to Nicosia, we passed a military guard post sitting high on a hill overlooking a village, and as we neared the city the image of the Turkish flag jumped out at me from the side of the Pentadactylos Mountains. And when I opened the curtains to my hotel room, I looked down on the barbed wire and bullet-pocked buildings of the Buffer Zone that divides the city and the island. Completing my initiation, I crossed the next day to the north, passing through the checkpoints on both sides of the time warp of the Buffer Zone. The

Green Line was no longer just a dotted mark on my map of Cyprus.

None of these signs of division were a surprise to me, as the Cyprus conflict had been part of my intellectual world since 1980, when my Greek and Greek-Cypriot students at the American College in Athens had impressed upon me their version of events. Later, my Turkish students in the United States helped me see the other side of the situation, and my own research helped me put it all in a larger perspective. Nevertheless, the impact of encountering the conditions in person was overwhelming. Now I was seeing and hearing myself the signs, symbols, and rhetoric to which I had been exposed previously only through the eyes and ears of others.

From the beginning of my stay in Cyprus I felt the weight of the conflict. I was in Cyprus not as a tourist but as a third-party facilitator, and the enormity of the task before me was evident not just in the outward signs of separation but particularly in the discussions I had with people around me. It seemed impossible to have a conversation with anyone – from the taxi driver to the shop owner to my neighbours to officials – without the Cyprus conflict entering the discussion. The intensity with which it was discussed, the polarization of the issues, the uncompromising attitudes, and the despondency conveyed by almost everyone combined to leave me less than hopeful about the possibility of serving in a useful role during my time in Cyprus.

It was not long, however, before a more positive force entered the picture, and it provided a much-needed lift in my spirits. I started meeting the individuals who were involved in the bi-communal activities. At that time, there were only a few, but their courage and commitment were impressive to me, and it takes only the dimmest of lights to help one navigate in a dark cave. Gradually, I overcame my initial shock and discouragement, and I took on what the diplomats often state as ‘cautious optimism.’

Over the years, as the bi-communal movement grew, I gained great respect for these early pioneers in Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot rapprochement. I saw them struggle through many difficulties,

most of which would have turned back the average person. I also witnessed them make mistakes, which temporarily set back their work, but from which they recovered and continued. Later I saw people drop out of different bi-communal groups because of various frustrations, and I watched the people in these new bi-communal groups make the same mistakes as others before. It was then I began to realize that those who became involved at later stages of the bi-communal work, bringing with them a tremendous amount of energy and new ideas, could benefit greatly from the wisdom of those who had gone before. Thus grew the idea for this guide.

Since returning to my academic position in the States in 1996, I have had several opportunities to make public presentations, take part in academic panels at conferences, and write articles for academic journals and chapters for edited books. In this guide, I have borrowed much from these earlier writings. These previous publications (see references) have been reviewed by colleagues in Cyprus, as well as subjected to the normal academic review process, so they have been scrutinized carefully. Nevertheless, some of my remarks are likely to generate disagreement. If there are mistakes in my observations, I take full responsibility. At the same time, I realize that it would be difficult to write anything meaningful that would be completely non-controversial. I hope that those who disagree with the ideas I present in this book will share their comments with me. I know that my own knowledge will continue to grow over time, as ideas are tested in the complex world of cross-cultural interaction.

Cypriots who enter into working relationships across the Green Line face a unique set of circumstances and need knowledge of the specific situation they will face as much as they need general principles and guidelines. Thus, in this book I have tried to present a balance of situation-specific information with well-tested principles about forming intercultural relationships, developing empathy, resolving interpersonal conflict, and working together productively.

Anytime a third party offers advice and guidance to those with whom he or she is working, a great deal of care is needed. Although



the people of Cyprus are my family and friends, and the shape of their future matters a great deal to me, I am constantly aware that I am an outsider to the Cyprus conflict. I did not live through the experiences that divided the island, and it is unlikely that I will suffer the direct consequences of failure to reach a satisfactory settlement. My status as an ‘insider-outsider’ allows me to play a special role in the conflict, but it does not give me a special lock on the ‘truth.’ Rather, it places me in a position to see the truth in the perspectives of both parties. If it serves no other purpose, I hope that this book helps its readers reach a similar place in their journey across the Green Line.



## 2. ENTERING UNFAMILIAR TERRITORY

The Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots lived together in peace before the Turkish invasion in 1974. We were neighbours, and we got along well, attending each other's weddings and other celebrations. Unfortunately, Turkey found an excuse to exercise its intentions about Cyprus, and when they used force to separate us, they destroyed the peace on our beautiful island.

Greek-Cypriot shop owner

Before the Peace Operation in 1974, the Greek Cypriots always treated us as second-class citizens. They controlled everything and they made our life miserable. It was not safe to travel, and we couldn't go to our fields and other places of work. We faced massacres and a systematic attempt to force us from the island. Fortunately, Turkey came to our rescue when things went too far (with the Greek coup), and now for the first time we have the opportunity to live in peace.

Turkish-Cypriot business leader

The two primary communities in Cyprus have been physically divided for forty years, since the outbreak of inter-communal hostilities in December 1963, which resulted in the creation of the Green Line running through Nicosia and the formation of Turkish-Cypriot enclaves throughout Cyprus. The 1974 war, which divided

the island into two ethnically distinct geographical areas, cut off nearly all contact and communication between the two communities. Without the opportunity to work together, socialize, or know each other as neighbours, a wide chasm was formed between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, generating misunderstandings, misconceptions, and mistrust. As time passed, unfavourable images of the other became more solidified and more difficult to change. People who once knew each other as neighbours lost touch with one another, and the new generation, with no direct experience of the other community, was left with nothing but the negative views passed on to them by parents, teachers, and the media. In today's world, where most societies are characterized by ethnic and cultural diversity, Cyprus became an anomaly, seemingly left behind by the winds of global change.

Until recently, the only mechanism for contact between the two communities was a small but steadily growing set of bi-communal activities, some organized through local efforts and others by the international community. Workshops, seminars, training programs, cultural events, social gatherings, and numerous joint projects brought people from the two communities together for a variety of opportunities to learn about each other. These activities have served as a positive force to help bridge the widening gap between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. They have helped change some of the inaccurate images each community holds of the other, and they have led to many friendships and working relationships. The bi-communal events have served as a crucial link between the two sides of the Buffer Zone, holding open a small channel of communication and keeping alive the possibility of a shared future.

Today the island finds itself in a place that would have been hard to imagine only a few years ago. For the first time in decades, travel is permitted back and forth across the Green Line, allowing ordinary people the opportunity, and for many the necessity, for contact across community lines<sup>1</sup>.

The potential for mutual learning offered by cross-community contact is not realized easily, however, and the prospect of

disappointment, discouragement, and disillusionment is always present. For many people who have 'given a try' to bi-communal groups, the experience has not been a satisfying one, often leading to frustration and painful feelings. For some individuals, meeting with the other side has served only to reinforce their previously held negative images.

There are numerous obstacles to successful experiences across the Green Line, and unless one is properly prepared for them, the possibility of failure is high. Just as importantly, a satisfying encounter requires appropriate attitudes and actions to be exhibited by both parties. Awareness of what it takes to promote positive bi-communal relations can go a long way toward ensuring that the encounter will be productive and satisfying.

In these few pages, I hope to offer some guidance for those who interact with individuals across community lines in Cyprus. First, I will provide a historical perspective on bi-communal contacts between the two communities, reviewing some of the many types of groups that have been formed during the past decade. Next, I will discuss the potential barriers to successful encounters across the Green Line, presenting some of the headaches and difficulties that could face those who enter into contacts with members of the other community. Then, I will examine the differences and commonalities in perceptions that Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots hold of one another. This will be followed by an examination of identity issues in Cyprus, particularly as they influence the Cyprus conflict. Subsequently, I will propose a number of actions that individuals and groups can take to promote positive, satisfying relationships across community lines. Finally, I will take a look at the potential contributions that bi-communal contacts can make to the future of Cyprus, and I will offer a few thoughts about preparing for life after a settlement. At the end of the book, I will suggest a list of resources available on the web for those who want to learn more about rapprochement in the region, and about intercultural communication and conflict resolution in general.

The ideas presented in this book are based on the experiences of hundreds of individuals in Cyprus who have taken part in bi-communal activities during the past decade. I've been fortunate to participate in several of the bi-communal groups that operated during this period, as well as a number of 'four-party' seminars held outside Cyprus. The discussions that we had in these groups and the difficulties that we worked through provided a wealth of information that can benefit others. I've observed the struggles that most groups experienced as they sought ways to reconcile differences. I've witnessed the changes many individuals went through as they came to terms with views that conflicted with what they had been taught about the other. I've talked with people as they tried to process all the new and often confusing information they gained from discussions involving the other community. And I've had the privilege of facilitating dialogue in a bi-communal setting on many difficult topics that form the core of the Cyprus conflict. In these pages, my aim is to present some of the collective wisdom generated in the meetings, seminars, workshops, and trainings in which I have participated, placing it in a form that can be useful to others.

I believe it is important to be realistic in describing the difficulties and differences one might face. Thus, some of the discussion might come across as quite direct or my warnings might seem harsh at times. My intention is not to discourage anyone from cross-community contact, but I believe it is important to enter such territory with full awareness of the potential pitfalls as well as promises. What seem to be smooth surfaces can turn out to be quicksand that swiftly traps unsuspecting journeyers.

My hope is that the information in this guidebook will enhance the quality of the experience for those who find themselves in conversation, group discussions, and working partnerships in a bi-communal setting in Cyprus or abroad. There is nothing that can guarantee success or smooth sailing, and sometimes things don't work out, no matter how hard one tries or which principles one puts into practice. At the same time, many people have fully satisfying

experiences without conscious awareness of the information discussed in the following sections. However, when we find ourselves in unfamiliar territory, it is always a good idea to consult a map of the area and to prepare for what might lie ahead. This can help prevent many wrong turns and dead ends, and it can help us stay out of quicksand and other difficult situations.

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<sup>1</sup> It is estimated that over 50% of Cypriots have crossed the Buffer Zone at least once since the partial lifting of restrictions. According to a report by the Justice Ministry of the Republic of Cyprus, there were 795,740 Greek-Cypriot visits to the north between June and August 2003, while the number of Turkish-Cypriot visits to the south was 664,564 (from the September 17, 2003 edition of the Cyprus Mail, [www.cyprus-mail.com](http://www.cyprus-mail.com)). Although traffic is busy on most days across the checkpoints, it is especially heavy on holidays. For example, according to a Greek-Cypriot police report (see the December 28, 2003 edition of the Cyprus Mail, [www.cyprus-mail.com](http://www.cyprus-mail.com)) more than 5,000 Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots crossed the Green Line on Christmas Day 2003, with nearly equal numbers from the two communities (2,667 Turkish Cypriots and 2,683 Greek Cypriots).



### 3. MAKING CONTACT

I resisted going to Ledra Palace for a long time. My uncle is still missing from 1974, and my entire family was angry with me for meeting with the Turkish Cypriots. Personally, I thought that as soon as I saw a Turkish Cypriot I would feel nothing but hatred and resentment, after all that has happened. But something compelled me to go – perhaps it was a moment of weakness. Now I spend more time with Turkish Cypriots than with my own family!

Greek-Cypriot civil servant

At first my friend had to twist my arm very hard to get me to meet with the Greek Cypriots. I had my doubts about their sincerity, and I couldn't see how any good could come of such meetings. Now I know they feel pain just like I do, and I realize that until we work together to ease it, everybody in Cyprus will continue suffering.

Turkish-Cypriot mother

When examined from a purely objective point of view, there should be little enthusiasm within either community to communicate and develop relationships across the Green Line. The negative portrayals of each other in the press, the bias in the educational system, and the rhetoric of politicians, combined with the difficulties surrounding any form of communication or contact, do little to

promote interest in bi-communal encounters. Fortunately, we have found that the wall of separation, even though it has existed for more than a generation, has not destroyed the desire of people to know their neighbours. Many people are eager to come together, and it is not only because of curiosity about 'life on the other side.' Many people have indicated to me that they feel a part of themselves missing because they are separated from their neighbours in the other community. There is a spirit of kinship that exists between the two communities, and although it is not publicly recognized, most people probably are eager for the 'family feud' to end so they can develop more normal relations with their 'cousins.'

Fifteen years ago, there were only a handful of people involved in regular bi-communal contacts. As more activities were organized, it became clear that there existed a large unspoken desire to meet people from the other community. This was particularly evident during 1994-1997, a period when hundreds of individuals participated in conflict resolution workshops and thousands of others attended various bi-communal events. The growth in these activities was slowed, but not stopped, by a decision of the Turkish-Cypriot authorities in December 1997 to stop granting permissions for Turkish Cypriots to cross the Buffer Zone to meet with their Greek-Cypriot counterparts. The number of people involved in bi-communal groups continued to grow despite many difficulties. This increase in contacts did not eliminate the overall mistrust that is present on both sides toward the other community, but it demonstrated the existence of a willingness to meet together to work on improving relations and building a basis for a common future.

After returning to my academic position in the USA in 1997, I was often asked to make presentations about the bi-communal work in Cyprus. Generally people were surprised to learn of the wide variety of groups that had been meeting and the large number of people involved in contacts with the other side. This surprise was shared by Cypriots, Greeks, Turks, American academics, local community members, and others who might have been in attendance. For most



of them, the only news they had received of Cyprus was about the negative actions that one side had taken toward the other. Even now, after more than a year of relatively open contact, few people are aware that there has been such a sustained effort over the years by citizen groups in Cyprus to build bridges across the Green Line.

In this chapter I will provide a brief historical overview of bi-communal contacts in Cyprus. Although it is not meant to be exhaustive, and it primarily covers the period until 2000, it will illustrate the many ways in which forward-thinking individuals helped keep alive the possibility of a joint future in Cyprus, and I hope it will help portray the larger context of which any bi-communal working relationship is a part. Having the bigger picture in mind can help us pass through difficult times and deal with the many frustrations that will inevitably occur (these are discussed in more detail in another chapter). Anyone who finds themselves on a bi-communal journey will find that many have gone before, and there will be a lot of company along the way.

### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF BI-COMMUNAL CONTACTS<sup>1</sup>

Although contacts between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have been limited since the start of inter-communal violence in 1963, and were almost completely shut off between the forced division in 1974 and the 2003 ‘opening’ of the checkpoint, there has never been a total cessation of contacts. Communities that identify themselves as Greek-Cypriot remained in the areas under Turkish-Cypriot administration (Maronite communities in the Kormokiti area and a shrinking pocket of mostly older Greek Cypriots in the Karpas), and people with families in these communities were allowed limited visits across the Buffer Zone. Approximately 200 Turkish Cypriots live south of the Buffer Zone, and during certain periods after 1974, a number of Turkish Cypriots were crossing the checkpoint in Famagusta to work in Agia Napa, Larnaca, and other towns in the southeast corner of the island<sup>2</sup>. There has also been significant contact among Cypriots

living outside Cyprus. For example, there are large communities of both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots living in cities such as London, and individuals socialize and work together. In addition, students from both communities often study at the same university in Europe and the United States, sometimes with meaningful contact.

In Cyprus, however, the restrictions placed on freedom of movement meant that special arrangements were necessary in order for most citizens to have contact with individuals on the other side of the Buffer Zone. Until the 'closing' of the checkpoint in December 1997, it was primarily through the assistance of international diplomatic missions that bi-communal meetings were held. Even with such assistance, it was always difficult and often impossible to arrange bi-communal activities. There were very few bi-communal meetings during the 1970s and 1980s, but for a short period of time, between 1994 and the end of 1997, bi-communal groups met regularly. However, in December 1997 political difficulties meant that Turkish Cypriots could no longer cross the checkpoint at Ledra Palace to meet with Greek Cypriots<sup>3</sup>.

Until this 'interruption' of bi-communal activities, there was a trend of increasing contact and communication, reaching a point in late 1997 when at least one bi-communal group was meeting almost every day of the week, bringing together over 2000 individuals across the dividing line. After permissions were stopped, most regular meetings of bi-communal groups in Cyprus ceased, but numerous contacts took place at the mixed village of Pyla, located in the Buffer Zone next to the British sovereign area. Between 1998 and 2003 it was one of the only places to which both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots had access. Occasionally, there were large gatherings allowed in the Buffer Zone, usually sponsored by the United Nations, political parties, or trade unions. In addition, meetings took place outside Cyprus, and hundreds of individuals maintained contact through the UN-operated telephone lines and with electronic mail.

Activities aimed at bringing together Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have spanned a wide range of issues. Some projects

have focused on practical matters, such as keeping the sewage system operating properly in the divided city of Nicosia. Others have focused on the political level, bringing together party leaders. A number of bi-communal concerts, art exhibitions, and dance performances have taken place. Professional gatherings of lawyers, architects, and trade unionists have been held. Workshops and seminars dealing with conflict resolution have been offered to various groups. Several ongoing groups have met together on a regular basis to discuss the core issues of the Cyprus problem. Special projects utilizing the Internet have been sponsored, and a number of electronic discussion groups were operating.

In general, bi-communal activities can be organized under six broad categories: Political Contacts; Business and Professional Meetings/Projects; Citizen Gatherings and Exchanges; Conflict Resolution Activities; Ongoing Bi-communal Groups; and, Special Projects (see Figure 1). The remainder of this section will describe each of these categories in more detail.

### **POLITICAL CONTACTS**

The one place where contacts are most essential in any conflict is at the political level. Without negotiation, discussion, and dialogue among the political leaders, military confrontation becomes more likely. Fortunately, Cyprus has avoided the latter since 1974, in part because the community leaders have maintained an ongoing series of negotiations, usually with U.N. sponsorship. Even though the negotiations often broke down without making much headway, and there were times when one side or the other refused to participate in talks, at least the dialogue has not broken off altogether.

In addition to the negotiations that have taken place between the political leaders of the two communities, there were other meetings involving political contacts. For a number of years, the Slovak Embassy sponsored regular gatherings of the leaders of the political parties in both communities. These meetings usually took place in Ledra Palace and were established as a way of helping the

FIGURE 1: BI-COMMUNAL CONTACTS IN CYPRUS



political leaders stay in touch with one another and exchange views. At times these meetings were held on a regular basis, and at other times there were long gaps between contacts, but over the years, the meetings have continued to take place.

There also have been occasional visits by political party leaders to the other community, where they have made presentations to a particular group or taped an interview that was broadcast on television. Pioneering these efforts, in May 1995, George Vassiliou, former President of the Republic of Cyprus, gave a presentation on the European Union to a large gathering sponsored by the Turkish-Cypriot Young Businessmen’s Association in Nicosia. In October 1997, Mustafa Akinci, leader of the Turkish-Cypriot TKP party, travelled to the Greek-Cypriot SIGMA TV station to appear on a televised panel dealing with political issues. Following these examples, other lectures and interviews took place in later years. Today, with the easing of restrictions on travel across the Buffer Zone, meetings between political party members and leaders are easier to arrange and more frequently held.

In addition, there were a number of contacts involving the youth wings of the political parties. For several years there were contacts between the youth organisations on the political left, organised primarily by EDON, the youth wing of AKEL. In 1996, a series of bi-communal workshops were organised for youth organisations across the political spectrum, culminating in a weeklong visit to Brussels sponsored by the European Commission. This group continued to meet together on a regular basis over the following year, and most of the youth organisations maintained contacts across the Buffer Zone that continued even after the 1997 restrictions. In September 2000, the youth organisations helped their parent parties organise a 'Festival of Mutual Understanding', held at Ledra Palace in the Buffer Zone. This event brought together over 7,000 Cypriots from both communities. Greek-Cypriot parties organising the event were DISY, AKEL, KISOS and the United Democrats; the Turkish Cypriot parties were the Patriotic Unity Movement, Republican Turkish Party and the Communal Liberation Party. The event included a bi-communal cultural programme with music, dance and poetry.

Several workshops have been conducted outside Cyprus for policy leader groups, including both elected officials and other community leaders. For example, ten Turkish Cypriots and ten Greek Cypriots attended a workshop in July 1994 at Coolfont resort in West Virginia in the United States. This group continued to meet together after returning to Cyprus. In a similar manner, many of the elected leaders and appointed political advisors in Cyprus participated in various workshops and seminars held outside Cyprus during the late 1990s and early 2000s. Although such encounters were not for the purpose of negotiating specific points of a settlement, they served to bring influential individuals from each community into contact with one another, preventing a total breakdown of communications.

## BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS

In many ways, the most 'natural' place for bi-communal contacts is in business and professional settings. Some argue that economic and collegial ties are the key to overcoming differences and building a stable basis for future cooperation. Unfortunately, it is precisely these contacts that are most difficult to initiate and sustain, particularly when both sides refuse to engage in activities they believe might grant legitimacy to the other's political institutions. In spite of the barriers, there were several groups that took initiatives to meet together during the past decade, well before restrictions were relaxed in 2003.

Starting in 1978, the visionary mayors of the divided city of Nicosia, Lellos Demetriades and Mustafa Akinci, formed a team of experts to spur the completion of a joint sewage system for Nicosia, the construction of which was interrupted by the hostilities in 1974. The success of this effort led them to the creation of a joint force that would develop a Nicosia Master Plan, a development blueprint dealing with all aspects of life in a city that both men hoped would soon be reunited under a single government comprised of separate ethnic zones. Architects, city planners, sociologists, and economists met regularly during the 1980s and into the 1990s in order to develop a scheme for developing business districts, housing areas, parks, and even traffic patterns.

In March 1997, representatives of more than sixteen trade unions in both communities held two historic meetings, one on each side of the Buffer Zone. The event, sponsored by the European Union, was the culmination of months of planning and meetings between steering committee members. The unionists discussed many issues, holding an open debate on such topics as the merits of Cyprus' entry into the EU. In September of that same year, on the occasion of International Peace Day, Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot trade unions submitted to the United Nations office in Cyprus a joint declaration, urging the international community and the island's leadership to 'hear the voice of the majority of the people and work towards a fair solution which will bring peace to the island.' Such meetings have continued through the present.

Two different but complementary efforts were undertaken to bring business leaders together. Both efforts were sponsored by the U.S. Mission in Cyprus. A group of senior business leaders was first brought together at Ledra Palace in 1995 by the U.S. Ambassador. Eventually, Richard Holbrooke, appointed by President Clinton as special envoy to Cyprus, brought this group together with their Greek and Turkish counterparts for a series of meetings outside Greece. Around the same time, the Cyprus Fulbright Commission started a group of young business leaders, and this group continued meeting on a regular basis through 1997. Both groups explored opportunities for cooperative business ventures that could be initiated prior to a settlement and under a future federated Cyprus.

The Cyprus Fulbright Commission sponsored a series of management training courses for mid-level and senior-level managers, involving more than 250 Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. A total of seven courses, each lasting for two to three weeks, were offered between 1994 and 1997, five of them for mid-level managers and two for senior-level managers. Topics covered in the workshops included investment appraisal, management methods, and marketing. All the seminars were conducted by the International Management Development Institute (IMDI) of the University of Pittsburgh. The managers who took part in these courses continued their contact with one another, eventually forming an ongoing bi-communal group and organising exchange visits to each side of the buffer zone.

Finally, a number of professional groups met in a bi-communal setting, including lawyers, educators, journalists, accountants, environmentalists, medical professionals, mental health care workers, social work professionals and others. In some cases, professional groups met outside Cyprus for workshops or special training. For example, a group of educators met in Boston in 1996, and a group of senior-level newspaper editors attended journalistic training together in Washington, D.C. in 1996. In most cases, however, the professional groups focused on special projects in

Cyprus related to their areas of interest. For example, a group of lawyers from the two communities started meeting in 1995, continuing their meetings until the end of 1997. Their main task was to review the changes in law that had taken place in the two communities since 1974, when the legal system had been a unitary one, so that integration of the now separated systems could be accomplished more easily after a political settlement is reached. Another example is provided by a group of educators who worked over a period of one year to identify ways in which the other community is portrayed in history books and literature taught to children in the school systems, proposing ways to eliminate the 'enemy image' from such materials. It is difficult to judge the overall impact these projects have had on the larger society, but the outcomes have been very important in changing perceptions among those involved.

#### CITIZEN GATHERINGS & EXCHANGES

Without contact between citizens from all sectors of society, it is unlikely that any agreement signed by political leaders will succeed. Yet, in Cyprus it is the ordinary citizens who were prevented from any kind of normal contact for twenty-nine years. Thus, it became even more important to find ways to organize citizen gatherings and exchanges. Although there were many barriers to such contact, there were numerous attempts to bring together people from all walks of life across the dividing line.

Perhaps the largest bi-communal gatherings were special receptions sponsored by various diplomatic missions. The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), for example, holds an annual open house on 24 October (U.N. Day), at which special activities are planned by the U.N. staff. These events have often attracted large numbers of individuals from both communities, sometimes totalling more than two thousand. There were also several receptions and programmes sponsored by individual embassies, often on the occasion of a particular country's important holiday, or in honour of a special guest to the island.



In addition to receptions and informal gatherings, the United Nations, often working with other diplomatic missions, organised several music concerts in recent years. A U.N.-sponsored pop concert featuring mainland Greek and Turkish singers was the first of its kind in Cyprus and brought together thousands of young Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriots in June 1997. The event was marred by protests in each community, but participants joined hands, gave each other flowers, and sang together 'Give Peace a Chance.' Several concerts at Ledra Palace over the years have featured local groups, and in every case the individuals in attendance mixed easily, dancing and singing together. In addition to these one-time musical events, a bi-communal choir was established and has been meeting together for several years to learn and practice songs that derive from each community's tradition<sup>4</sup>.

Special exhibitions were also held featuring art, photography, and other works by individuals in both communities. For example, in 1996 there was an exhibition sponsored by the European Union of political cartoons by both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. The American Center sponsored an exhibition of photographs taken on both sides of the Buffer Zone. The Peace Centre in the Greek-Cypriot community organised a recitation of Turkish-Cypriot poetry. These exhibitions did not bring together large numbers of people, but they served as important symbols of peaceful co-existence.

Finally, several pilgrimages were organised in which Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were able to visit holy sites on the 'other side' of the Buffer Zone. Greek Cypriots were allowed on several occasions to visit one of the most important Orthodox sites on the island, Apostolos Andreas monastery in the Karpas. As many as 1,300 pilgrims travelled in buses from Nicosia to the remote church, usually on the saint's feast day. In a corresponding gesture of good will, programs were organized to bring Turkish-Cypriot pilgrims to Hala Sultan Tekke in Larnaca, one of Islam's most venerable shrines. In none of these visits was there much, if any, contact of the pilgrims with the local population. Nevertheless, the pilgrimages served to

reconnect those who made the visits with the important places on the island, helping to ease the pain brought about by lack of access.

The various gatherings and exchanges involving citizens groups in Cyprus cannot, by themselves, bring about significant social change. Receptions, concerts, exhibitions, and visits to religious sites do not offer opportunities for more than casual exchanges, and in many cases people may meet only a single time without seeing each other again. Symbolically, however, they were very important in promoting a better future for Cyprus. They allowed people to meet face-to-face, and they helped to dispel some of the myths that are perpetuated about the other community through the education and media systems. It is more difficult, following a pleasant conversation with a fellow Cypriot, to continue spreading hatred. However, for genuine change to occur, the opportunity for deeper and more sustained dialogue must be possible. This was the role of the various bi-communal activities described in the next section<sup>5</sup>.

#### CONFLICT RESOLUTION ACTIVITIES<sup>6</sup>

The most sustained and intense efforts to promote bi-communal contacts during the past decade came in the form of workshops, training programs, and seminars dealing with the growing field of conflict resolution. These took the form of problem-solving workshops, introductory and advanced conflict-resolution skills-training, interactive design processes, mediation training, and special seminars and study groups dealing with issues such as identity, property concerns, federation, and European Union issues. In a society where conflict permeates the system, these activities played a crucial role in providing a way to deal more effectively with differences. They helped many individuals in each community gain a better understanding of the issues as perceived by the other side, and they introduced new skills into the repertoire of each community. Significantly, they provided a 'safe space' in which healing and reconciliation could take place, thus relieving some of the immense psychological burden that plagues the whole of Cyprus.

Finally, they resulted in many bi-communal friendships and working relationships that could not have existed otherwise.

The problem-solving workshops in Cyprus had their beginnings in 1966, when John Burton and his colleagues in London offered a five-day workshop in ‘controlled communication’ that brought together high-level representatives from the two communities<sup>7</sup>. Some years later, in 1973, an informal seminar involving political leaders of the two communities was held in Rome<sup>8</sup>. Attempting to build on the success of this event, Lawrence Doob made plans to offer a workshop in Cyprus in July 1974, but the events of that period precluded such an activity<sup>9</sup>. A locally organised workshop involving intellectuals, called ‘Operation Locksmith,’ was held with Doob’s participation in 1985. In 1979 and again in 1984 problem-solving workshops were conducted for community leaders by Herbert Kelman and his colleagues at Harvard University<sup>10</sup>. Ron Fisher held a series of four workshops over a five-year period, with the two primary workshops focusing on the educational system in the two communities<sup>11</sup>. A local initiative of inter-communal contacts that grew out of this work started in September 1989, leading to a joint social action group under the name ‘The Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot Citizens’ Movement for Democracy and Federation in Cyprus<sup>12</sup>.’

Taken together, the problem-solving workshops started a new type of dialogue in Cyprus, one that was based on attempts to understand and build trust rather than on accusatory rhetoric and condemnation of the other. These workshops served an important purpose by exposing a core group of Cypriots to the growing academic field of conflict resolution. This allowed a local initiative to develop with a goal of unofficial diplomacy at the citizens’ level. Calls arose for more assistance from third-party facilitators and trainers, which set the stage for a sustained effort to offer conflict resolution skills training on a broad basis across society.

The conflict resolution skills training began in July 1991, when Louise Diamond, a conflict resolution specialist from the Institute for

Multi-Track Diplomacy (IMTD) in the United States, visited Cyprus at the invitation of members of the newly formed Peace Centre in the Greek-Cypriot community and began offering mini-workshops on conflict resolution. In October 1992, she conducted a one-day workshop in each community, sponsored by the Peace Centre in Nicosia<sup>13</sup>, and a joint steering committee was formed for purposes of promoting conflict resolution efforts in Cyprus<sup>14</sup>. This led to a workshop that took place in July 1993, when a group of ten Greek Cypriots and ten Turkish Cypriots went to Oxford, England, for a ten-day period<sup>15</sup>. Partly as a result of the success of this program, a number of conflict resolution workshops were held in the summer of 1994 organised by the Cyprus Fulbright Commission (CFC) and conducted by the Cyprus Consortium, a group that consists of IMTD, the Conflict Management Group (CMG) of Harvard University, and National Training Laboratory (NTL) based in Virginia. The team leaders for this effort were Louise Diamond and her colleague Diana Chigas (from CMG). Funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development and administered by CFC, several weeklong workshops were offered, including two that covered basic conflict resolution principles and skills and one that offered training for those interested in conducting local conflict resolution workshops. During the period 1995-1997, more workshops conducted by the Cyprus Consortium were held in both Cyprus and in the United States, including an advanced 'training of trainers' workshop, which allowed local Cypriots to offer introductory conflict resolution skills workshops to their fellow citizens, both in bi-communal and mono-communal settings.

An ongoing series of workshops were held for student recipients of a grant from the Cyprus American Scholarship Program (CASP) to study in the United States. CASP workshops have been held in the United States nearly every year since 1993. These workshops each last approximately one week, with anywhere from twenty-five to fifty students taking part. These are geared toward undergraduate seniors and graduate students who are finishing their studies in the United States and returning to Cyprus. Other conflict

resolution skills training has been targeted toward the younger generation, ages sixteen to eighteen. This training took the form of youth camps held in the United States, with several at the School for International Training in Vermont and several in Maine, conducted by Seeds of Peace. In all cases, after returning to Cyprus, these young people continued their contacts and in many ways assumed the leadership role in promoting bi-communal activities.

The conflict resolution skills training played a crucial role in the overall development of bi-communal activities in Cyprus. Not only did it introduce a new set of skills into Cypriot society, but it provided an almost 'therapeutic' setting in which individuals could come to terms with some of the pain and suffering brought about by the communal separation. Such training also fostered new relationships and more accurate perceptions of the other. Perhaps most importantly, the conflict resolution activities brought together the primary players who would soon form a stronger citizens-based peace movement, which began to take shape with the start of the interactive design workshops that focused on developing a strategy for peace-building in Cyprus<sup>16</sup>.

This series of interactive design workshops started in the fall of 1994, with the initial group involving participants from the summer 1994 conflict resolution workshops. During the nine months from October 1994 through to June 1995, a process referred to as Interactive Management (IM) was used to help a bi-communal group of fifteen Greek Cypriots and fifteen Turkish Cypriots develop a strategy for their peace-building efforts in Cyprus<sup>17</sup>. During these sessions, the group progressed through three stages of planning and design: (1) analysis of the current situation; (2) goal setting for the future; and (3) development of a collaborative action agenda. The group met in the evenings on a weekly basis, and occasionally on weekends. In the beginning months, the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot groups worked separately, because the political situation did not permit bi-communal meetings. These became possible in February 1995, after which the participants met together

in the Buffer Zone. This group produced a systems analysis of the obstacles to peace-building efforts in Cyprus, created a 'collective vision statement' for the future of peace-building activities in Cyprus, and developed a plan of activities that would guide their work over the following two to three years. The latter consisted of fifteen projects, including workshops, presentations, training programs, and other events. After the staging of an 'agora/bazar,' to which individuals were invited to sign up for these projects, approximately 300 individuals became involved in twelve bi-communal projects<sup>18</sup>.

As part of the set of fifteen projects, additional design and problem-solving workshops were conducted during 1995 and 1996 with groups of young business leaders, youth leaders, and women's groups. These groups initially met in separate communal workshops for the analysis phase, and then they came together for purposes of identifying and structuring goals for the future of their work. All three of these groups met together for approximately one year, and each of the groups was able to spend a full week together in Brussels, at a seminar sponsored by the European Commission. During 1997, IM workshops also were conducted with student groups and citizen groups. Unfortunately, these workshops were interrupted by the ban on bi-communal activities at the end of 1997 and were not able to progress through all the phases of the design process. A training program was conducted in December 1997, in which eighteen Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots received instruction in Interactive Management, preparing them to offer IM workshops to other groups in Cyprus. In addition, a new effort was carried out in August 1997, bringing together Cypriot peace-builders with their counterparts in Greece and Turkey for a weeklong IM workshop in Les Diablerets, Switzerland.

In general, the IM workshops helped carry the bi-communal movement into an 'action stage,' in which participants in previous problem-solving and conflict resolution workshops began to take leadership roles in designing and implementing projects that

involved members of both communities. This was a crucial stage for the bi-communal work, because it marked the transition from a primarily training activity to greater activism and local initiative. The third-party role shifted from instructor, trainer, or facilitator to that of consultant, advisor, and equal partner in strategy development. The former roles have continued to be important, but the primary responsibility for much of the training and development of new initiatives began to fall on the shoulders of those who had participated in earlier workshops, trainings, and problem-solving sessions.

Complementing the previous skills training in conflict resolution, a series of mediation training programs was offered by Fulbright Scholar Marco Turk, starting in the fall of 1997 and continuing through the spring of 1999. Turk was assisted in some of this training during the 1997-1998 academic year by Fulbright Scholar John Ungerleider. These workshops were offered to both bi-communal and mono-communal groups and consisted of programs ranging from fifteen to forty hours of instruction, exercises, role-playing, and discussion about applications in participants' work, home, or community settings. Some groups received advanced training totalling over one hundred hours of instruction, qualifying them to offer training to others in Cyprus. In total, approximately 500 participants received over 600 hours of training in conflict management and mediation. Workshops were offered to bi-communal citizens groups, teachers, psychiatric nurses, a Turkish-Cypriot women's group, mental health care professionals, the Domestic Violence Crisis Centre, the Cyprus Police Academy, both Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot citizens groups, youth groups, American International School teachers, United Nations Humanitarian troops, and others. After bi-communal activities were interrupted in December 1997, Turk took several bi-communal groups outside Cyprus for training in mediation and negotiation. Later, a mediation centre was established in each community which has been organizing and administering training programs as well as the mediation of actual disputes. Taken together, these workshops

introduced new sets of skills to Cypriots in both communities, and they provided many opportunities for bi-communal contact<sup>19</sup>.

The workshops, training, design sessions, and other activities often brought up subjects that are at the core of the Cyprus problem. In order to discuss some of these topics in more depth, special study groups and seminars were organized on topics such as identity issues, property concerns, the meaning of ‘federalism,’ and the nature of the European Union. For example, in 1996, a six-week seminar examined the topic of ‘identity.’ Participants discussed what it means to be a ‘Greek Cypriot’ or ‘Turkish Cypriot,’ dealing with themes such as degree of inheritance from the ‘Motherlands’ of Greece and Turkey, ways in which both identities have been shaped by the Cyprus problem, and commonalities and uniqueness in song, dance, and other aspects of Cypriot culture. It was an enlightening experience for all participants, helping them understand better their own and the others’ perceptions. In addition to the seminars, other special study groups were formed. For example, the Cyprus Consortium set up an ‘intractability study,’ examining the factors that have led to the current situation in Cyprus. The World Peace Foundation sponsored a one-time seminar, held in Boston, bringing together Cypriot academics with international experts to find ways to move the peace process forward in Cyprus. Fulbright Scholar Philip Snyder created a group to study environmental issues. Other special groups of this type have been formed, all of them oriented primarily toward understanding specific issues in greater depth.

#### **PIONEERING BI-COMMUNAL GROUPS<sup>20</sup>**

The problem-solving workshops, conflict resolution skills training, interactive design workshops, and the mediation training led to the formation of numerous bi-communal groups that met regularly, many of them on a weekly basis. Most of these groups adopted a special focus, oriented toward a professional area (e.g. education), a particular sector of society (e.g. women), or a special task (e.g. developing links among peace-builders in the eastern



Mediterranean). Some of the groups have been mentioned above; for example, the group of young political leaders and the group of young business leaders were formed in conjunction with the interactive design workshops and later each developed into an ongoing bi-communal group. The number of groups established in this manner is too numerous to list in this paper, but a short description of some of these groups will illustrate their activities<sup>21</sup>.

The bi-communal 'Trainers' group was formed following the conflict resolution skills workshops held during the summer of 1994. After their experience in these workshops, several participants expressed a desire to work together in training others in conflict resolution skills, and they were joined by individuals who wanted to promote other types of peace-building activities. This group initially worked together over a nine-month period in a series of interactive design sessions (see previous section), creating a collective vision statement and a collaborative action agenda for peace-building activities. The 'agora/bazar' described earlier led to the formation of several ongoing groups and several special projects. They continued working together after their initial project was finished, forming a 'coordinating group' for the various bi-communal activities in which they were involved, and meeting together for support and further training. After 1995, they expanded their group to include others trained in problem solving approaches, conflict resolution skills, interactive design methodologies, and mediation skills. This ongoing bi-communal group forms the core around which the majority of bi-communal activities in Cyprus took place during the period 1994-1997, and it is their 'offspring' who continued to organize many of the bi-communal activities that developed after 1997. They endured many difficulties together and formed a very strong group identity. They have also been a primary resource for nearly all third-party facilitators and trainers who have worked in Cyprus, and they are regularly called upon to give advice to various international diplomatic personnel.

The bi-communal educators group was formed during a three-day conflict resolution workshop in October 1995, which was

followed by a second workshop for educators in May 1996. Many of the members of this group were originally involved in a series of problem-solving workshops held in the early 1990s. After a seven-day workshop for higher-level educators that took place in Boston in August 1996, many of the participants from the various workshops came together to form a core group of individuals concerned primarily with issues inherent to those who teach in public and private schools and universities in Cyprus. This group took on a number of projects, including an in-depth study of the educational systems as they operate in Cyprus and their impact on people's perceptions of the conflict. They were also responsible for starting the Youth Encounters for Peace (YEP) described below. Overall, this group of educators is dealing with one of the most important topics that must be addressed before sustained peace is possible in Cyprus. As long as the school systems continue to present a one-sided view of the conflict and negative perceptions about the other community, the conflict will carry itself over into future generations indefinitely.

The bi-communal women's group started with an interactive design workshop in May 1996, focused on factors that create pain and suffering in Cyprus, as seen through the eyes of women. This workshop, which continued over the course of several months, led to other groups dealing with women's issues. Efforts were made to write a 'women's history' of Cyprus, to examine why there are so few women in decision-making bodies in Cyprus, and to create a 'Cyprus Link' based on the successful 'Jerusalem Link' that has been in existence for many years. A group of Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot women travelled together and participated in the Beijing U.N. Women's Conference in 1995, and with the initiative of the European Union, a group of women visited Brussels in 1997. Although various projects have involved a wide range of women, the core group that began meeting in 1996 has continued to convene and lead the way in many of these endeavours. Their work offers a perspective on the Cyprus conflict that can be provided only by such a group, and they are addressing issues that have long been ignored in Cyprus. Perhaps

most importantly, this group is giving voice to a segment of the population that is usually the victim of the military confrontations and other violence created by men.

The bi-communal student group, consisting of students studying at public and private universities, started in October 1996. Most of these students had never met anyone from the other community, and in spite of some anxiety, they established excellent rapport in their first meeting. After several meetings, in which they explored many common interests, they met with each of the two community leaders, Mr. Clerides and Mr. Denktash. Later they went together for a one-week seminar in Budapest, and upon returning they began to enlarge their group. Eventually, another group of university students was formed, and the members of the first group organised a conflict resolution workshop for this new group. Just before the interruption of bi-communal activities in December 1997, the students were meeting as a single group and planning many projects. During 1998 the students continued meeting in separate community groups, waiting eagerly for the time when they could continue their work together. The success of the student group was surprising, given the high level of extremist rhetoric that is generally found among students. However, the ability of these students to work together across community lines is a testament to the possibility for rapprochement among those who are too young to have directly experienced the events of 1974<sup>22</sup>.

In August 1997 a regional peace-building group met together for the first time in the Swiss village of Les Diablerets. The six-day workshop, sponsored by Fondation Suisse de Bons Offices (FOSBO), brought together leading members of the peace-building community from Cyprus, Greece, and Turkey to explore ways of developing links between individuals and groups that are involved in rapprochement activities in the eastern Mediterranean. After a very successful meeting, in which several 'four-way' projects were developed involving individuals from Turkey, Greece, and the two communities of Cyprus, the group maintained communication during the remainder of 1997, meeting

in December at Ledra Palace in Nicosia (Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots) and in January 1998 in Istanbul (Turks and Greeks). Plans were made for the development of an institute under the umbrella of which funding could be sought for various events. The interruption of bi-communal activities just after their meetings in December made it difficult to continue the group's work as planned, but communications continued among the group members, and several of them participated in four-way seminars held later, including a seminar held in Sigtuna, Sweden, in 1999. Organized by the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, this meeting provided an opportunity for some members of the Les Diablerets group to meet again face-to-face and to begin making plans for future efforts. The same group met again on the Greek island of Chios in 2000 (again organized by Uppsala University), and in 2001 a four-way meeting (involving participants from Greece and Turkey as well as the two communities of Cyprus) was held in Bruges, Belgium (this time supported with a grant from the Bi-communal Development Programme (BDP), which is funded by USAID and UNDP and is executed by UNOPS). Although the Bruges group met for the first time not long before the restrictions were put in place at the end of 1997, it helped take the peace-building work in Cyprus to a new level, by connecting participants directly with their counterparts in Greece and Turkey<sup>23</sup>.

### SPECIAL PROJECTS

The conflict resolution workshops and the 'agora/bazar' that resulted from the initial interactive design workshops in 1995 led to a number of special projects. These became the forerunners of dozens of initiatives that exist today, many supported by the BDP<sup>24</sup>. It is beyond the scope of this paper to describe all of the projects currently going on, but several of the early initiatives can be offered as examples.

One of the more inspiring projects is an initiative called Youth Encounters for Peace (YEP), which has brought together numerous groups of young people, ages sixteen to nineteen. Until this program started, most of the youth in Cyprus had never met anyone from the

other community. This project provides the younger generation with an opportunity to get to know the people with whom they will share the island of Cyprus in the future. The encounters organised by YEP started in July 1997 with a two-day gathering that brought together thirty Greek Cypriots and thirty Turkish Cypriots. A second group was formed in October 1997, and a third group in December of the same year. Between 1998 and 2002, more than eight additional groups were formed. They sponsored several events, including musical concerts, festivals, dances, tree-plantings, and workshops. One of the most innovative and inspiring events was the co-villagers' meetings, which brought together Cypriots who had lived in the same village before 1974. The first such event, held in July 1999, focused on the town of Paphos, while later events were organised for other villagers. At these events, individuals who had not seen each other for twenty-five to thirty-five years were re-united at emotional gatherings that included the exchange of food, drink, photos and in some cases treasured personal items that had been left behind in 1974 and saved by neighbours.

The YEP project helped inspire another youth-oriented program called Youth Promoting Peace (Y2P), which was established in 2000. The members of this project sought to promote close cooperation between the young people in the two communities, creating bridges of communication between the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot youth. They organized a number of conferences dealing with topics such as education in Cyprus and the potential socio-economic impact of the European Union, and they conducted several workshops on topics such as negotiation skills, prospects and expectation of the Annan Plan, and conflict resolution. Additionally, they organized music festivals and other activities, such as 'Fly a Kite for Peace' day in 2003 and a tree planting in Pyla in 2000. These youth groups helped initiate and organize in 2000 the 'Cyprus Day of Peace,' now celebrated on 30 September each year<sup>25</sup>.

An innovative BDP-sponsored project called Technology for Peace (TFP) utilized the Internet to bring people together across the

Buffer Zone. In addition to introducing those involved in the bi-communal work to the use of the Internet, it sought to build an infrastructure for all bi-communal groups to better coordinate their activities, by posting announcements and information about meetings, storing records of products produced during meetings, and providing space for electronic discussion groups. It also aimed to document the history of various groups' activities and to help people locate funding possibilities, obtain information on the issues they were discussing, and develop links with other groups around the world. The project idea was initially developed as part of the interactive design group's 1995 'agora/bazar,' and its first Internet workshop was held in 1996. Three workshops were held in August 1997, facilitated by a U.S. team of experts from the Institute of World Affairs in Washington D.C. Two of the workshops were mono-communal training in each community, and the third was a 'virtual' workshop held using special software that allowed participants to take part in a cross-communal negotiation simulation. This led to other training workshops in the summer of 1998, and continued use of the TFP infrastructure by various groups to exchange messages and information. A website was developed that provided space to bi-communal groups to post information about their activities and to use it as a means of communication among members and with outside groups. With the ban on bi-communal contacts, the project became even more important, because it promoted more organised and continuous communication, and it opened a new dimension in bi-communal rapprochement by allowing means of collaboration that did not necessarily require face-to-face contact<sup>26</sup>.

Another special project, again emanating from the interactive design group's 'agora/bazar' in 1995, resulted in several issues of *Hade* bi-communal magazine. The initial issues of this publication were produced by a dedicated group of writers working under very difficult circumstances. Its title, *Hade*, is a word that means basically 'Let's go' to both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, and it features articles written by members of both communities. In the first issue,

which used English for most of the articles, authors discussed many topics related to peace-building efforts in Cyprus. There are stories about bi-communal groups, about specific bi-communal events, and about the experiences of individuals who visited places on ‘the other side’ for the first time. The edition also included poetry and book reviews. It was a success in both communities, and a second edition was published, this one with articles in Greek and Turkish. Unfortunately, internal conflict and difficulties related to working across the Green Line led to a halt to publication, and so far, there have been no new editions.

As the bi-communal groups attracted more funding, particularly from the BDP, some of them became more institutionalized. The mediation groups that had been meeting under the guidance of Fulbright Scholar Marco Turk created a Mediation Centre in both communities. A Management Centre was set up in the north, with a full-time staff, offering specialized training to individuals and groups in the Turkish Cypriot community. An NGO Resource Centre was established in the south, providing a meeting space and resource library for a wide range of organizations in the Greek Cypriot community. The establishment of these institutions gave the bi-communal groups more legitimacy within the larger society, and they make it possible to serve a larger number of people in Cyprus, offering services that help strengthen civil society.

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<sup>1</sup> Portions of this chapter are based on material I prepared for a manuscript to be published in a new book by Anastasios Tamis and Michalis Michael (Eds.), *Cyprus in the Modern World*.

<sup>2</sup> In most cases, the individuals who live “on the other side” face discrimination, prejudice, lack of language services, and other difficulties.

<sup>3</sup> In December 1997, after the decision of the European Union to delay a decision granting Turkey candidate status, the Turkish-Cypriot authorities stopped giving permissions for Turkish Cypriots to cross into the Buffer Zone for meetings with Greek Cypriots. Later, the Turkish-Cypriot authorities instituted rules that allowed ‘officially recognized’ organizations to meet together in the Buffer Zone. However, the only organizations meeting this designation were certain trade unions and political parties.

<sup>4</sup> The bi-communal choir faced difficulties from the beginning in obtaining permission to meet together. After the interruption of bi-communal activities in 1997, they continued to meet on a regular basis in mono-communal groups, separately rehearsing

traditional Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot songs as well as songs of the Turkish composer Livanelli and the Greek composer Theodorakis. They have performed together outside Cyprus, including a historic concert in Istanbul, as well as at the few bi-communal events that have been held since 1997 in the Buffer Zone.

<sup>5</sup> In February 2002, a new project was started under the name 'Citizens' Movement for Reunification and Coexistence'. The overall aim was to create a visible citizens' peace-building movement operating within the Greek-Cypriot community.

<sup>6</sup> See Broome (1998) for a description of conflict resolution activities in Cyprus. Diamond and Fisher (1995) examines the important work of the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy. Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis (1993) provides an inside look at track two diplomacy in Cyprus.

<sup>7</sup> See Burton, 1969; Mitchell, 1981.

<sup>8</sup> See Talbot, 1977.

<sup>9</sup> See Doob, 1987.

<sup>10</sup> See Stoddard, 1986.

<sup>11</sup> See Fisher 1992 & 1997.

<sup>12</sup> See Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Although this centre operated primarily in the Greek-Cypriot community, its stated purpose was bi-communal in nature, with the intention of involving both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots in the operation and activities of the centre. Due to the political constraints, it was unable to operate as a true bi-communal organization, but it helped organize a number of conflict resolution workshops and public presentations in the Greek-Cypriot community with a focus on bi-communal issues.

<sup>14</sup> This group later became known as the 'Bi-communal Steering Committee'. It served in the capacity of advisor for development of further conflict resolution activities, and it eventually obtained a room in Ledra Palace for its office and meetings. It has been recognized in at least one U.N. report for the valuable role it plays in promoting better relations between the two communities.

<sup>15</sup> See Diamond & Fisher, 1995.

<sup>16</sup> The Senior Fulbright Scholars in Cyprus have played important roles in the conflict resolution skills training, among other activities. Individuals who contributed in significant ways to the conflict resolution efforts include John Ungerleider, School for International Training in Vermont, Senior Fulbright Scholar during the 1997-1998 academic year; Eric Neisser, Rutgers University Law School, Senior Fulbright Scholar during the 1995-1996 academic year; Marco Turk, University of California at Irvine, Senior Fulbright Scholar from the fall of 1997 through to the spring of 1999 (see section on mediation training); and Philip Snyder, Cornell University, Senior Fulbright Scholar from January 1997 through to June 1998. In addition to his involvement in the conflict resolution skills training, Snyder played a particularly important role in facilitating the rapid expansion of bi-communal activities that took place during 1997. Other Fulbright Scholars in recent years include: Emil and Marion Angelica, St. Louis University (1998-1999 academic year); David Johnson, University of Tennessee (1998-1999 academic year), John Tirman (Aug-Dec, 1999), David Churchman, California State University (Jan-June, 2000), and Hermann Peine, University of Utah (2000-2001 academic year). Tirman developed a website, located at <http://www.cyprus-conflict.net>, that provides information related to the bi-communal activities in Cyprus.

<sup>17</sup> Interactive Management is an approach to group design developed specifically to deal with complex problem situations (see Broome & Keever, 1989; Warfield, 1994).

<sup>18</sup> A full report of these workshop activities is available from the author. See also



Broome, 1997 and Broome, 1998 for a more complete description of the IM workshops with the core group.

<sup>19</sup> In addition to the numerous workshops offered by Turk, Pete Swanson, a trainer with the Federal Mediation Service in Washington, offered a weeklong training program for a bi-communal group in the fall of 1997.

<sup>20</sup> Many of the groups described in this section are no longer meeting regularly. The withdrawal of permissions for bi-communal meetings in December 1997 made it practically impossible for these groups to continue meeting on a consistent basis. However, during the time period when they were able to meet, they established friendships and working partnerships that continued throughout the ban, and they found other ways to maintain contact and work together.

<sup>21</sup> During most of 1996 and 1997, there existed anywhere from ten to fifteen ongoing bi-communal groups. In addition to the groups described in this section, the young business leaders, youth leaders, citizen's group, lawyers, journalists, policy leaders, and a number of others were meeting every month, and sometimes more often. Of these, the group that called itself the "Citizens Group" is of particular importance. It kept its meetings open to anyone who wanted to attend, and for some time it remained more active than the others after the interruption of bi-communal activities in 1997. In addition, many of the project groups (see following section) were also meeting regularly.

<sup>22</sup> See Broome (1999) for a description of the university student group.

<sup>23</sup> The seminars held abroad led to the creation of several island-based think-tank and action groups. The most recent is called the Cyprus Forum, set up in July 2002. Its founding members include influential public figures, academics, and business persons who are dedicated to developing creative ways to address the Cyprus conflict.

<sup>24</sup> The Bi-communal Development Programme (BDP), which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and is executed by the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS), funds bi-communal projects. The BDP aims at promoting the peace-building process in Cyprus by encouraging the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities to work together in the preparation and implementation of projects in areas of common interest. Proposals (projects) for funding under the Programme can be submitted either by public agencies or independent entities such as professional groups and NGOs. The Programme gives priority to activities in environment, public infrastructure, public and animal health, governance and civil society, education and culture, and information and communication technology. A description of BDP activities can be found at the website: <http://www.unopspmu.org>

<sup>25</sup> Many of the youth activities grew out of the very successful summer camps held in the United States. Cypriot youth attended for several years both the well-known Seeds of Peace camp in Maine (see <http://www.seedsofpeace.org/>) and summer camps organized by John Ungerleider at the School for International Training in Vermont (see <http://www.sit.edu/>). Between 1997 and 2003, over 1000 young people attended these camps. For the students who attended, it was the first time they had met anyone from the other community, and most of them went back to Cyprus with a strong desire to continue seeing each other and a determination to work for peace.

<sup>26</sup> Another website was established in June 2000 with aims to increase awareness about ongoing peace-building efforts, increase participation in them, and provide a forum and tools for the organization of new peace-building projects. Located at <http://www.peace-cyprus.org/>, this internet site includes announcements of special events, reports of activities that take place, news about developments, petition campaigns, editorials, papers, and presentations about Cyprus. It also hosts artistic projects suitable for the web, including poetry, short stories, photography, painting, architecture, film and video, music or multimedia projects related with Cyprus and peace.



## 4. CONFRONTING OBSTACLES

Sometimes it's very discouraging. We face a lot of difficulties in going to Ledra Palace every week. We believe we are doing a great service for Turkish Cypriots – it's the only way to help the other side understand our point of view – yet it seems that within our own society the forces against us are growing everyday. I often wonder if it's worth all the sacrifices.

Turkish-Cypriot social worker

I feel as if all the hard work we've done has gone down the drain. After the Buffer Zone events last week [August 1996], the only voice left is that of the hard liners. We thought we had taken a few small steps forward, but now we have taken a giant leap backwards. I don't know if there is any reason to continue.

Greek-Cypriot schoolteacher

A decade ago individuals involved in contacts across the Buffer Zone were routinely criticized in both communities for their meetings with the other side. At best they were viewed as idealistic, naïve, and dreamers. Worse, they were accused as traitors to the national cause, as friends of the enemy, as paid agents of the international community. The media either ignored them or were vicious in their attacks, claiming they were 'betraying their country'

or 'selling out' to the other side. The authorities at times quietly tolerated bi-communal activities and at times were openly critical of them. It was not easy for these early pioneers to go against the prevailing mood in their own societies and exercise their basic human right to meet and discuss issues with fellow human beings.

In some ways, things have not changed a great deal from these early days of bi-communal meetings. Many people (perhaps the majority) are still sceptical about the benefits of promoting cross-community contact, and most people are hesitant to participate in bi-communal activities and events. The type of resistance varies over time, with different age groups, and between communities, but even with the increase in numbers of people involved, and even after the April 2003 lifting of checkpoint restrictions there is still not widespread support for activities that promote cross-community contact. In some cases, even today, those who are involved in such activities are criticized and occasionally harassed.

Although each person's experience will differ, and conditions will change over time, there are a number of obstacles that those engaged in joint efforts across the Green Line will likely face. Many of these difficulties emanate from the social and political reality of Cyprus. In a society where there are many interest groups with a stake in maintaining the status quo of the conflict, resistance to reconciliation efforts is unavoidable. And in a social system where the existence of the conflict has become part of everyday existence, the meeting of individuals across the dividing line can be perceived as a serious threat to the comfortable (if undesirable) status quo. Finally, for those who suffered from the loss of loved ones, property, and a way of life, any attempt to understand the point of view of the other may be considered inappropriate and even insensitive.

No longer 'banned' from meeting or needing 'permissions' to meet at Ledra Palace, it has been possible since April 2003 for individuals and groups to meet nearly anywhere in Cyprus. Even though many of the old restrictions are gone, cross-community contacts continue to be plagued by various political events. And even though

the authorities on each side no longer condemn the work of peace builders, there are still many in each community who oppose any activities that bring people together across the Green Line. In this chapter, I will discuss some of the obstacles that have made bi-communal contact difficult in the past, and which are still present in the new situation, perhaps at a more subtle level. For some people, the frustrations associated with these difficulties are overbearing, while others accept them as unavoidable burdens that one has to bear. In any case, it is best to have them in mind during one's bi-communal journey<sup>1</sup>.

#### USE OF BI-COMMUNAL EVENTS AS A POLITICAL TOOL

In December 1997, when authorities in the north stopped granting permissions for Turkish Cypriots to cross the checkpoint to attend meetings in the Buffer Zone, the event made few newspaper headlines. However, the change in policy marked a crucial turning point in the growth of bi-communal activities, and perhaps in the Cyprus conflict itself. In many ways this 'ban' on bi-communal activities was as disappointing as the breakdown in political negotiations that had taken place earlier that same year. It meant that dozens of groups, involving perhaps as many as 2,000 individuals, could no longer continue their regular meetings, and the projects in which they were engaged became much more difficult to realize.

The Turkish-Cypriot authorities withdrew permissions for bi-communal meetings just after the European Union decisions to (a) exclude Turkey in the group of countries for which it would consider membership, while (b) simultaneously agreeing to start direct accession negotiations with the Greek-Cypriot controlled Republic of Cyprus. The Turkish-Cypriot leadership decided that all contact with Greek Cypriots, at the official and unofficial levels, would stop until they were accepted as an equal and recognized partner in these negotiations and until Turkey was placed on the list of candidates for European Union membership. The bi-communal activities became a victim of political events, and for the first time they were used as a political tool in the complex world of international politics.

This use of the bi-communal activities as a political tool was partly a result of their success during the 1990s. By December 1997 they had grown to the point where they could no longer be dismissed as simply an irritant to authorities. Indeed, with so many people taking part in regular events that brought people together across the dividing line, and with several high-profile professional groups involved, these activities were starting to have a subtle influence on the political process itself. In addition, most of the international diplomatic community was solidly behind the bi-communal activities, and more and more diplomatic missions were becoming involved in supporting them. Thus, bi-communal activities were seen by the Turkish-Cypriot authorities as the ideal political tool to gain leverage with the international community, while simultaneously shutting down some of the growing pressure from the opposition groups that supported these activities. Ironically, the growing strength of the bi-communal activities created a situation that made their continuation very difficult.

While this ban brought a temporary halt to the momentum that had built up among those involved in bi-communal activities, it was not the first time such a limitation had been placed on contacts. Throughout the 1990s permissions were often difficult to obtain, and sometimes even when they were given, it was only at the last minute that participants were notified that their application had been approved. Often, just before a meeting was to take place, permissions that had been granted previously were withdrawn. Frequently some names that had been submitted were left off the list provided to the guards at the checkpoint, meaning these individuals could not pass into the Buffer Zone and join their colleagues in the meeting<sup>2</sup>. There were long periods during which no bi-communal activities could take place because permissions were routinely denied for the Turkish Cypriot participants to pass the checkpoint. The primary difference with the situation from December 1997 to April 2003 was the semi-permanent nature of the permission ban during that period. At the time, there seemed to be no end to it in sight, and even the full weight of the diplomatic community had not been able to reverse the closure.

Although the Turkish-Cypriot authorities received most of the criticism for preventing their own people from meeting with individuals in the other community, the Greek Cypriots also placed many obstacles in the way of bi-communal contacts. In part, the willingness of the Turkish-Cypriot authorities to defy the international community's call for resumption of bi-communal activities was due to the Greek Cypriots' use of the events for their own political purposes. It has long been a theme of the Greek Cypriots to state that 'the two communities have always lived together in peace until the Turkish invasion,' and they have consistently put forth the view that 'if the Turkish army left Cyprus, the two communities would manage their own affairs without problems.' For the Greek Cypriots, the existence of productive bi-communal contacts seemed to prove their point that Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have no trouble getting along. The Turkish Cypriots, on the other hand, advocated exactly the opposite point of view, pushing the theme that 'Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have never lived together peacefully and never will.' The rapid growth of the bi-communal activities crept into the Greek-Cypriot political rhetoric and in the media, and even the extreme nationalists were beginning to state, often with a disdainful tone, that 'the ease with which the two communities mix at bi-communal events prove that the Cyprus problem is not an inter-communal affair; rather, it is only the Turkish invasion that keeps us apart.' Needless to say, this rhetoric on the part of Greek Cypriots did not sit well with the Turkish Cypriots, and the EU decision on Turkey's future membership possibilities provided a convenient way to remove the source of this 'thorn' in their side.

#### **NEGATIVE PORTRAYALS IN THE MEDIA**

Especially during the early days of bi-communal efforts, the various media in Cyprus tended to portray the activities and those who participated in them in a negative manner. Newspapers, magazines, and radio and TV commentators attacked the individuals involved in

such endeavours, often misrepresenting their intentions and defaming their character. When the citizens' initiative was launched in 1989, there were severe attacks from newspaper journalists in both communities against those who participated. The participants who returned from the ten-day conflict resolution workshop in Oxford, England, in 1993 suffered a similar fate, especially in the Greek-Cypriot press. The Turkish-Cypriot media strongly condemned participants in the 1994 conflict resolution seminars. During the 1996 period of sustained growth in bi-communal activities, several prominent Greek-Cypriot magazines published articles ridiculing many of those taking part in cross-community workshops, distorting the nature of the activities and painting an inaccurate and sinister picture of those involved.

As portrayed in the Greek-Cypriot media at the time, contacts with the other side served mainly to give credence to those who wanted to classify the situation as an 'inter-communal conflict,' taking the emphasis away from the international dimension of the situation (i.e., it should be viewed strictly as a problem of 'invasion, occupation, and violation of human rights'). Articles in the Turkish-Cypriot press claimed that meetings between citizens from the two communities sent the wrong message about the need for the two communities to live apart, and they pointed to the 'danger' that the Turkish-Cypriot participants would be 'charmed' by the Greek Cypriots and would forget the crimes committed against them in the past. The people who participated were often called 'traitors,' accused of being 'unpatriotic' to the national cause, or ridiculed as 'friends of the enemy.' The press in the two communities took turns at accusing participants of being 'pawns in the American game,' or 'trained by the CIA' to distort the minds of unsuspecting people. At one point, the Turkish-Cypriot press accused participants of being part of a group that had organised a series of 'communist cells' to overthrow the government. Greek Cypriots often claimed that the Turkish-Cypriot participants in these activities were sent by their authorities to present the official view, and Turkish Cypriots claimed that the Greek Cypriots

were using the meetings to make a political statement about inter-communal harmony. At best, participants were portrayed as naïve and unrealistic, unable to see the dangers of cavorting with those whose true intentions are to dominate them or drive them from the island.

Fortunately, even though there are still negative press reports that distort the overall picture of rapprochement efforts, media coverage of cross-community activities has improved recently, particularly since the openings in April 2003. However, the media in general has not lived up to its potential as a strong tool for peace. Hopefully, things will continue to improve, but those involved in inter-communal activities are not likely to find much encouragement for their efforts from the newspapers they read, the radio programs to which they listen, or the TV programs which they watch. This will not only make it difficult for the general population to voluntarily participate in bi-communal activities, but it will encourage the continuation of an overall critical stance toward such efforts and toward those involved in them.

#### CONCERN ABOUT 'RECOGNITION'

The bi-communal activities in Cyprus have been able to progress further than anyone a decade ago imagined possible, especially in light of the extremely difficult political situation on the island. Nevertheless, the projects that were successfully implemented by bi-communal teams were limited in scope and focused primarily on cultural and educational activities. They were prevented from reaching a level where sustained working partnerships between businesses and institutions, which are the essence of a future unitary state in Cyprus, could be formed. A major barrier that prevented bi-communal activities from entering this important stage of development was the concern, especially by Greek Cypriots, about 'recognition' of the other community. The Greek Cypriots did not want to allow any activities, such as business partnerships, that might have a chance of being interpreted as legitimising what they termed 'the invasion and illegal occupation' of Cyprus.



On one level, this concern is easy to understand, especially from a strategic point of view. Both Greek-Cypriot officials and international analysts are quick to point out that the international recognition of the Republic of Cyprus, and the corresponding lack of recognition of the ‘Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus,’ or ‘TRNC,’ is the primary advantage enjoyed by the Greek Cypriots in their attempt to negotiate with the Turkish Cypriots. The Greek-Cypriot National Guard forces are no match for the Turkish troops deployed across the Buffer Zone, and any military confrontation would quickly end in disaster for the Greek Cypriots. Their success in obtaining resolutions from the United Nations condemning the Turkish intervention in 1974 and calling for withdrawal of foreign troops from Cypriot soil has counted as perhaps the only ‘victory’ for the Greek Cypriots in thirty years of stalled negotiations. They have gradually accepted the inevitability of a federal bi-zonal solution, but demands for recognition of the ‘TRNC’ prior to further negotiations is probably more than the Greek-Cypriot population will ever accept. The ‘recognition card’ is one they intend to hold onto until the end, probably for good reason, according to political analysts.

Unfortunately, Greek Cypriots’ concerns about recognition tend to go far beyond the level of recognising a Turkish-Cypriot state. They extend into every level of society, including business exchanges and institutional relations. The Greek Cypriots are afraid of a ‘domino’ effect that might result from giving even a hint of recognition to any level of Turkish-Cypriot society. For example, when the Turkish-Cypriot branch of the Rotary Club applied for membership with the international office of that organisation, the Greek Cypriots blocked such an association. Even in cases where a similar organisation did not exist in the Greek-Cypriot community, they used their status as the internationally recognised political entity to block the Turkish Cypriots from joining their branch of the organisation with the international office. In one case, after learning of a Turkish-Cypriot request to become part of the international association of a worldwide business-oriented group, the Greek Cypriots formed their own

branch of that organisation and applied for membership in the name of Cyprus, fearful that the Turkish-Cypriot branch might be given membership because it was the only one on the island.

This concern about recognition extends to sports teams, community organisations, business ventures, and even to academic institutions. Several academic seminars dealing with regional issues were held in the late 1990s at a leading private college in Nicosia, involving Greek-Cypriot and Greek academicians, speakers from abroad (including Turkey), and even Turkish Cypriots teaching in London or the United States. Turkish-Cypriot academics teaching at institutions of higher learning in the north of Cyprus, however, were not invited, even during periods when permissions for cross-visits were allowed<sup>3</sup>.

A similar obstacle blocked progress in several bi-communal groups dealing with business concerns. The group of young business leaders described earlier eventually stopped meeting regularly, even during the period when bi-communal contacts were growing elsewhere, because their attempts to establish joint business projects could not go forward. They had met for nearly two years, engaging in numerous productive discussions about core issues, but without an opportunity to work together doing what they did best, which is practicing business, they did not have sufficient motivation to carry on. A similar difficulty prevented a group of senior business leaders from engaging in joint projects.

The concern about recognition affected even the details of bi-communal meetings, especially those held outside Cyprus, to which professionals from each community were often invited. In this case, it became difficult to use many professional and institutional titles, which as a normal practice at such professional gatherings are usually placed on address lists, invitations, nametags, etc. The concern of the Greek Cypriots was that using a person's title, such as 'mayor,' might imply recognition, or listing someone's institution, such as 'Eastern Mediterranean University,' might help legitimise an institution that received funding from 'illegal sources.' Since most

funding organisations are not familiar with such sensitivities, the titles and institutional affiliations were often included in lists of participants, on nameplates at the conference table, or as part of introductions, and this often resulted in protests from Greek Cypriots. In some cases, the entire Greek-Cypriot delegation walked away from such meetings, to the great embarrassment of their hosts. This did not help create a good impression abroad about the maturity of Cypriots.

Although this discussion of recognition has focused on the Greek Cypriots' concern about granting legitimacy to the division, the Turkish Cypriots also stopped many potential activities out of fear about actions that might indicate their recognition of the Republic of Cyprus as their representative to the international community. One such case concerned the European Union funds made available for bi-communal activities under the 'Fourth Protocol.' For a number of years, the European Commission attempted to find a way to implement procedures for distributing these funds, but to be utilised the project needed to be bi-communal in nature and approved by the planning bureau of the Republic of Cyprus. Because of the latter requirement, Turkish Cypriots would not accept any of the funds. Many of the bi-communal groups developed projects that could have utilised money from the Fourth Protocol, but their concern about participating in a project that must be officially sanctioned by the Greek-Cypriot government prevented them from taking part. And, without Turkish-Cypriot participation in a project, it was very difficult to claim it as a bi-communal effort. This difficulty prevented many viable projects dealing with environmental, educational, health, and cultural issues from going forward<sup>4</sup>.

Taken together, the political uses of bi-communal contacts, the negative images promoted by the media, and the fear of recognition severely affected bi-communal activities in Cyprus. Often participants became too frustrated to continue. Some international sponsors decided that funding bi-communal activities in Cyprus was

not worth such an effort. Both Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot attitudes hardened when confronted with these obstacles. Greek Cypriots interpreted the 'ban' on bi-communal activities as evidence of intransigence by the Turkish Cypriots, and Turkish Cypriots saw the Greek Cypriots' refusal to allow their sports teams, business organisations, educational groups, and NGOs access to full participation in international affairs as a true sign of their disinterest in a genuine partnership.

Unfortunately, many of these obstacles have not disappeared, even with the partial opening of the checkpoints to travel across the Buffer Zone. Hopefully, they will be less of a barrier once a political settlement is reached, but the concerns that lie behind these obstacles could affect the successful implementation of that settlement.

#### PERSONAL CRITICISM

In addition to the societal factors that have always stood in the way of bi-communal activities, participants have also faced barriers on a more personal level. This was particularly evident in the earlier days of bi-communal gatherings, when after returning to their homes after meeting in Ledra Palace, they often heard people state things about the other side that went against what they were learning from their own experience with the other. When they would try to help their friends understand that what they were saying might not be true, inevitably they would have to deal repeatedly with people making statements like: 'you're just being naïve,' or 'most of them are not like the ones you met,' or 'you were in an artificial setting.' Even worse, their friends might make fun of them or accuse them of collaborating with the enemy.

It has never been easy for those involved in bi-communal activities to explain their thoughts to those who have not had the experience of meeting with the other side. However, the alternative, to keep silent, is usually not an option in a society where talk is so highly valued, and where there is little anonymity.

### DEALING WITH FRUSTRATION

Taken together, the political uses of bi-communal contacts, the concern about recognition, the negative images promoted by the media, and criticism from family and friends, severely affected bi-communal activities in Cyprus. Often participants became too frustrated to continue. Some international sponsors decided it was not worth the effort. Both Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot attitudes hardened when confronted with these obstacles but Greek Cypriots interpreted the 'ban' on bi-communal activities as evidence of intransigence by the Turkish Cypriots, and Turkish Cypriots saw the Greek Cypriots refusal to allow their sports teams, business organizations, educational groups, and NGOs access to full participation in international affairs as a sign of their disinterest in a genuine partnership.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that these obstacles will disappear any time soon. By reaching across the Green Line for contact with the other community, it is inevitable that you will face these and similar difficulties. It will be easy to become discouraged, and at times you will be tempted to 'give up.' It is best to keep in mind that hundreds of other people continued their involvement over the years in spite of the frustrations and dangers. Perhaps it is helpful to remember that all the broad, level roads along which we travel today were once footpaths, full of stumbling blocks. Over time, as more people take the bi-communal path, it will become wider, smoother, and less cluttered with obstacles.

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<sup>1</sup> Portions of this chapter are based on material I prepared for a manuscript to be published in a new book by Anastasios Tamis and Michalis Michael (Eds.), *Cyprus in the Modern World*.

<sup>2</sup> See Broome (1999b) for a description of difficulties obtaining permissions for bi-communal events.

<sup>3</sup> On one occasion, when I was speaking at such a seminar, a group of Turkish Cypriots traveling together in the south on a bi-communal excursion came to hear my talk, providing an ironic contrast to the recognition concerns displayed even by academic institutions!

<sup>4</sup> In 2003 a program was finally put in place to utilize these funds. For information see: <http://www.delcyp.cec.eu.int/en/index.html>



## 5. ENCOUNTERING IMAGES

I've never met anyone from the other side, but my parents and my teachers have told me all my life about how the Greek Cypriots used to treat us as second-class citizens, causing us to fear for our safety, and driving us into enclaves. I would like to meet and talk with Greek Cypriots, to learn for myself what they are like.

Turkish-Cypriot student

Meet with Turkish Cypriots? I wouldn't mind, really, but with all the propaganda they've been given about Greek Cypriots, they probably think we have little horns growing on our heads and EOKA tattoos painted on our arms. I hope I can show them that we're not so bad!

Greek-Cypriot student

Our lives revolve around images. Since we are limited in how much we can experience ourselves, most of what we know is dependent on information we receive from teachers, textbooks, parents, relatives, friends, the media, etc. While some sources are less distorted than others, all information is biased in one way or another. And we have no choice but to use this data, however inaccurate or

limited it may be, in forming impressions, making decisions, and taking action. Images serve as our guide to reality.

Until recently, very few people in Cyprus had direct experience with individuals in the other community. Members of the older generation could remember what the other was like 30 or 40 years ago, but memory is very selective and changes over the years made these memories unreliable as a guide to today's situation. Faced with this situation, young and old alike had to rely on information that was distorted, often deliberately. The education system, the media, the politicians, and even family members painted incomplete and misleading pictures of people and life on the other side of the Green Line. For most Cypriots, there was no alternative but to accept these depictions as authentic, since as long as contact was limited there was little chance for it to be disputed.

The situation is different today, with contact across the Green Line possible for anyone and likely for many. However, this increase in contact means that the images of the past are even more likely to be encountered, and sometimes they will not be flattering. Greek Cypriots will find that Turkish Cypriots believe certain things about them that seem incredulous. Turkish Cypriots will find Greek Cypriots unbelievably naïve about certain aspects of life in the north. Some of these images can be humorous, while others can be insulting. Misunderstandings and hurt feelings are likely.

Although it will not take care of the problem by itself, it is important to be prepared for how each side sees the other. This section will describe some of the images that exist on each side about the other, in the hope that this information might help the reader interpret better what is heard in discussions. It also might help one question some of the views he/she holds of the other side.

The observations in the following sections are based on results from a series of mono-communal seminars that were focused on images of self and other in Cyprus. In these separately held meetings, participants generated ideas in response to several questions, including the following: 'What perceptions exist within

our society (Turkish-Cypriot or Greek-Cypriot) about the other community (Greek Cypriots or Turkish Cypriots) – in the media, education system, government statements and documents, diplomatic circles, family gatherings, coffeehouses, and other places?’ After generating responses to these questions, discussion centred on which of these were most widely held among the general population.

The following sections focus on the images likely to be encountered in meeting with people from the other side. Some of the images are probably well known, while others might come as a surprise. In either case, it is important to bear in mind that although these images might be widespread within the overall population, a particular individual could hold very different views. We are all exposed to different information, and we all process it in a multitude of ways because of our previous experiences and belief systems. Even so, it is a good idea to be aware of the existence of these images and to realize that they are ‘out there’ waiting to enter any discussion<sup>1</sup>.

#### HOW DO TURKISH CYPRIOTS SEE GREEK CYPRIOTS?

Many of the images in Turkish-Cypriot society about the other side were formed during the period from 1963-1974, when they experienced discrimination, harassment, and persecution as a minority in Cyprus. Greek Cypriots had fought during the British period for ‘enosis’, or union with Greece, and many saw as a disappointment the independence that resulted from their struggle. The constitution was viewed as unworkable and included too many privileges for the Turkish Cypriots. There was resentment by the Greek Cypriots about what was perceived as unfair advantages, as well as frustration from the inability to pass legislation. When the Turkish Cypriots withdrew into enclaves scattered throughout the island, they became invisible to most Greek Cypriots, and extremist groups were able to act with impunity. The suffering of the Turkish Cypriots during this period, which went unnoticed by the majority of the Greek-Cypriot population, is firmly embedded in the minds and hearts of Turkish Cypriots. Fortunately, Turkish Cypriots hold a few



positive images of Greek Cypriots, but it is the negative characteristics that receive constant reinforcement from the authorities, the educational system, and the media.

In general, some of the more commonly held beliefs about the Greek Cypriots include the following:

■ 'Greek Cypriots think Cyprus belongs to them. They believe that Cyprus is a Greek island, that they are the rightful owners. They have not been able to abandon the Megali Idea that points toward enosis with Greece. Greek Cypriots don't believe we have a right to be in Cyprus. They don't respect us or even recognize our communal identity. They think we are under full control of Turkey, without a will of our own.'

■ 'Greek Cypriots ignore their responsibilities for past mistakes. They think the conflict started in 1974. They always concentrate on the Turkish military actions, but they fail to see what happened before that, how they created the conditions for the Turkish intervention. Greek Cypriots distort the facts about the period 1963-1974, the missing persons, the stolen icons, and other issues, making it seem as if everything was fine until Turkey intervened.'

■ 'Greek Cypriots fail to understand the reality in the north. They don't see the growing disparity between the two sides, and they misunderstand our wish to have our autonomy and equality. They don't see how the embargos they implement hurt them in the long run, giving us Turkey as our only window to the rest of the world. They have a naïve view of the situation with Anatolian Turks coming to Cyprus, and they don't see that it is their own actions that are bringing more of them. The conditions are driving us away from Cyprus, and soon they will find themselves sharing the island with Turkish peasants rather than with Turkish Cypriots.'

■ 'Greek Cypriots think of us as inferior. They don't understand that we have our own political institutions, that we have a democratically elected government, that we have rules and regulations under which we administrate our society. They don't realize the creativity and ingenuity it takes just to keep things working, and how our business

skills have enabled us to survive in the face of many difficulties. They still think of us as ‘good enough for making shamishi. If there is ever the possibility for them to do so, they will try to make us their workers again.’

■ ‘Greek Cypriots are preoccupied with their own victimization. They fail to see that they have victimized others. We know they have some genuine and serious concerns about their security, but they are not at all concerned about our security. Greek Cypriots have a superiority complex, not only toward us but towards others as well. They want everything for themselves. They take all the advantages and benefits of being recognized, and they do not share it with us.’

■ ‘Greek Cypriots are not serious about resolving the conflict. They would like to see things return to the pre-1974 status, when they were in control of the whole island, but they don’t want a solution based on true partnership. In fact, they fail to understand what partnership means; they don’t see the importance of equal political status. They lack understanding of the issue of parity, both politically and economically. Greek Cypriots do not have strong enough pain to need change from the present status, and they have no incentive for compromise. Their desire to join the European Union was driven by political motives, and they don’t see how the final result will be the permanent division of Cyprus. Perhaps this is what they want, so they don’t have to deal with us any more.’

■ ‘Greek Cypriots are not realistic about the future. They think that if the Turkish army leaves, everything will be okay. They don’t understand that unrestricted freedom of movement will allow the extremists on both sides to create trouble. They forget to mention that since 1974 there have been very few civilian deaths in Cyprus at the hands of the other community. No one would want to see EOKA and TMT operating again. Greek Cypriots also have false hopes of returning to their former homes. They seem to be living in a dream world, thinking they can just turn back the hands of time and make things like they used to be. Finally, Greek Cypriots forget that entering the European Union will mean that Europeans will be able

to settle more easily in Cyprus. They don't understand the changes that will take place when they have to follow European rules.'

■ 'Individually, the Greek Cypriots are good people. They are very serious, and they have been very successful in building a strong economy and persuasive in influencing international opinion. They are diplomatic, polite, and can be quite charming. In social situations, they are fun to be with – good singers and dancers, and plenty of really funny jokes! Unfortunately, they are more religious than us, and they are controlled too much by the church. We are also worried that Russian interest groups and the Russian mafia are gaining too much influence over some politicians.'

#### HOW DO GREEK CYPRIOTS SEE TURKISH CYPRIOTS?

Unlike the Turkish Cypriots, the Greek-Cypriot community does not have a history of oppression by the other side. They don't talk about a time when life was bad with the Turkish Cypriots, and they don't feel relieved that the past is behind them. Most of the images that Greek Cypriots hold of the other side are based on the 1974 events. And even then the negative feelings are directed primarily toward Turkey rather than toward the Turkish Cypriots. For the most part, the Greek Cypriots remember the time before 1974 as a period of peaceful harmony, with the two communities living together in mixed villages, attending each other's weddings, and working together in the fields. Of course, the reality was different, and as described earlier, the Turkish-Cypriot memory of this period is poles apart from the Greek-Cypriot version. Nevertheless, there are a variety of images prevalent within Greek-Cypriot society about the Turkish Cypriots.

Some of the more commonly held beliefs about the Turkish Cypriots include the following:

■ 'Turkish Cypriots are pawns of Turkey. They have no say about Cyprus - they are powerless about developments on the island. They are used by Turkey, which does not really care about them except for its own strategic interests. Even though they are 'protected' by the

Turkish army, they are also oppressed by them, having no voice of their own. They are passive, afraid to speak up, even though we know the Turks do not care about them.'

■ 'The agenda of the Turkish Cypriots is to divide the island. They do not really want a solution. They already have what they were seeking, and in the negotiations they simply stall for time, always finding a way to block progress. Their intransigence makes it impossible for us to hope for a settlement.'

■ 'Turkish Cypriots' demands are disproportionate to their size. At less than 20% of the population (and decreasing every day as they leave and are replaced by Turkish settlers), they want 50% of the power. And they are interested in sharing power only in the south – in the north they want to be masters. They have nearly 40% of our land, and they don't want to give any of it back. They have our houses, our hotels, our beaches, our farmland, our orchards, and they don't know how to manage or take care of any of it. And to make matters worse they have the most beautiful part of Cyprus, including our jewel, Kyrenia, our lovely mountains, the Pentedactylos, and the wonderful beaches of Famagusta. Panayia mou!'

■ 'Turkish Cypriots do not respect international law. No nation has the right to invade and occupy another sovereign country. The United Nations, the United States, and the European Union, along with the entire world community has condemned the Turkish invasion and called for the removal of Turkish troops. Resolution after resolution in the U.N. has been ignored by the Turkish Cypriots and Turkey. They complain that we imposed an embargo on them, but it is the international community that refuses to trade with them. The only reason they can get by with their blatant disregard for the law is the military strength of Turkey standing behind them.'

■ 'Turkish Cypriots are favoured by the international community. Despite their intransigence, their illegal status, their violation of international law, their refusal to negotiate seriously, the Turkish Cypriots have not been pressured by the international community to make concessions. We are asked to give and give, and we never see

anything in return. It is because the West supports Turkey. They think they need her as an ally, but they don't realize how untrustworthy she is.'

■ 'Turkish Cypriots are not economically and culturally advanced. Their economy is so depressed that they have to rely completely on Turkey for their survival. In the case of a solution, they will pose an economic burden for Greek Cypriots. And they have not contributed much to our civilization – no beautiful art, great literature, architectural masterpieces, or democratic ideals. In Cyprus we have a rich legacy of over 8000 years, and the Turkish Cypriots have been here only a short while. All they've been able to do is take our churches and add minarets.'

■ 'Turkish Cypriots have a place in Cyprus. We never had any trouble getting along with the Turkish Cypriots, before the Turks set their sights on Cyprus. We have a lot in common with them, certainly more than with the Turks anyway, and we have many shared interests related to the European Union. They will be our enemies as long as they occupy our properties, but we used to be neighbours. We are not sure we can live together again, after all that has happened. We're sure that if Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots were left alone they would find their way forward.'

#### APPRECIATING DIFFERENCES

One of the potential benefits of bi-communal contact is change in the negative and distorted images that each side holds of the other, hopefully replacing them with a more sophisticated view. In order for Cyprus to experience genuine peace at some point, the parties have to work through differences in perceptions and develop an understanding and appreciation of each other's point of view. Furthermore, they must work to form a shared vision of the island's future, so that in spite of the differences in their interpretations of the past, they can move beyond these opposing views to create a place where both communities can live in peace and work toward common goals.

In my discussions with those who have taken part in workshops and seminars, nearly everyone talks about how much their picture of the other side has been altered. They also give emphasis to the importance of being able to present to the other side a different perspective about life in their own community. It is clear that the exchange is both ways, and it is a learning experience for everyone.

The end result, however, is never present at the beginning of one's journey, and along the way, the going can be rough at times. When we hear someone make statements about our community that we believe are clearly mistaken, our natural reaction is to immediately 'correct' that person. Usually, we try to do this even before they finish their statement! No one wants to hear negative information, especially if we know it is not true. And most of the time we take it personally. When Greek Cypriots hear about how they used to carry out massacres in Turkish-Cypriot villages, they feel as if they are being accused of having carried out these deeds themselves, which they clearly have not done. When Turkish Cypriots hear that they have stolen Greek-Cypriot property, they feel accused of being a criminal, and the hurt feelings associated with this indictment are not easy to keep inside.

Unfortunately, our attempts to correct or refute others' statements, as well as our vigorous defense against perceived accusations, simply make matters worse. Most of the time they reinforce in the other's mind (and in our own) the accuracy of the image. Such argumentative debate is almost always a waste of time, and even worse, it contributes to the perpetuation of the conflict. In some ways, it might be better never to have met, because now the two sides can say with confidence that they have 'seen for themselves' the other side, and sadly it seems that what they heard is true after all.

It is important to keep in mind that the individuals making the negative statements did not create them, and probably they never decided consciously to use them. Like all of us, they simply are relying on the information that is available to them, and they are

repeating things they have heard all their life. As with all stereotypes, there is probably some truth in what they are saying. At a minimum, the statements are based on events that once happened in some form, even if they no longer take place or if they were exaggerated. It is best to frame the situation as a two-way educational opportunity. We might say to ourselves: ‘Here in front of me, is someone from whom I can learn something new. He/she has a perspective on my community that I will never have the opportunity to hear at home. And if they get to know me, some of their perceptions might change -- perhaps I can contribute also to their learning.’

Unfortunately, changes in perceptions are not likely to occur after a single encounter. When I meet with the other person, I might be able to show him/her something different from what he/she was told all his/her life, but I am just one person, and there are always exceptions to the rule. In any case, after the other’s encounter with me, he/she will go back (as I will) to the same environment that created and nurtured these perceptions in the first place, and it will not be easy for him/her to hold tightly to what he/she saw and heard during their discussions with me. In order for real change to occur, and in order for each party to develop genuine empathy for the other’s point of view, there will need to be numerous conversations, over time, in different environments, and with a variety of people. And the exchange will have to be more than social ‘chit-chat.’ Serious discussions about central issues form the basis for real change in perceptions.

### RECOGNIZING VARIETY

There is a tendency to view the other community as homogeneous and to portray them in strictly negative terms. Yet the other is never an undifferentiated entity, and neither is everyone on one’s own side all of the same opinion. It is important to recognize the variety that exists among the ‘enemy’ or within one’s own community. Most of the bi-communal groups that have formed are composed of individuals from various political persuasions, with quite different

views about what must be done to improve the situation in Cyprus. It is misleading to state that this is the ‘Greek-Cypriot position’ or the ‘Turkish-Cypriot position.’ Indeed, we have found that there is sometimes more similarity across community lines than there is within each community. It is often the case that Greek Cypriots will form closer ties with other Turkish Cypriots than they will with many of their compatriots. Of course, there is an ‘official’ position on each side and in the beginning stages of group work it is these views that often dominate. However, as the group develops a more open climate of sharing, individual differences are brought out into the open and form the basis for discussion. From the more than 200 bi-communal meetings and workshops in which I have participated, I have rarely seen discussion about issues which fall along strictly community lines. This richness of intra-communal differences may make it more difficult for the extremists in either side to promote separation of the two communities, and it is a factor that promises greater possibility for inter-communal cooperation in the future.

### DISCOVERING COMMONALITIES

While it is crucial to recognize, confront, and appreciate differences, it is important to realize that Cypriots also share common interests, common aspirations, and even a common culture. After all, Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots have lived on the island together for 400 years! For most of their shared history they have confronted similar problems and lived under similar conditions. As a friend reminded me once while we were watching the sunset in Paphos, the same sun rises and sets on both the north and south of the island. And despite differences in language, religion, and ethnic origin, Cypriots are fellow human beings, struggling to survive and prosper, providing a better life for their families and trying to ensure a proper future for their children. Commonalities are not always as easy to spot as differences, especially in conflict situations, but they form the basis for any meaningful relationship.



Unfortunately, the subject of commonalities among Cypriots has been politicized (like most issues in Cyprus!). In their attempts to stress the need for communal separation, Turkish-Cypriot rhetoric tends to overemphasize the differences between the communities, while in their attempt to stress the need for a unified island, Greek-Cypriot rhetoric tends to overestimate the similarities. This is a case in which the views of both sides are essentially correct on one level and dangerously wrong on another level. By giving primary emphasis to the commonalities between the two communities, the Greek Cypriots are failing to take into account fundamental areas of disagreement that prevent the two sides from coming together. By focusing on the differences, the Turkish Cypriots are helping to create a situation where people may not be able to live together again when a solution becomes a reality.

I have seen almost every group with which I have worked in Cyprus go through a stage in which the Greek Cypriots are shocked by the disparity between their views and those of their colleagues in the other community, and I've seen Turkish Cypriots constantly struggle with (and sometimes resist) the realization that there is much more commonality between the two sides than they expected. Individuals and groups need to develop a more balanced picture that is closer to the reality of Cyprus, putting them in a better position for working together in a true partnership characterized by trust, empathy, and respect.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to keep in mind that the contacts that have taken place since April 2003 have affected these images in ways that are not yet known. It would be useful to conduct again a series of workshops in which questions about images of the other could be explored. A recent Master's thesis by Zenon Severis, *The Effects Of The Opening Of The Green Line On Young Greek Cypriots And Their Perception Of Identity* is one of the first research projects to address this question. Perhaps as you read this section, you can think about ways in which the images reported here, which were characteristic of the larger population before the recent 'openings,' have changed or are changing, hopefully in ways that lessen their negative impact.



## 6. EXAMINING IDENTITY<sup>1</sup>

I don't feel complete with my country divided. Part of me is missing. I yearn for Kyrenia, for Karpas, and most of all for my mother's village, Lapithos. But I also ache because the Turkish Cypriots are no longer in my life.

Greek-Cypriot journalist

I'm grateful for our freedom, that we can live without fear of the Greeks. But my soul is troubled. I carry a heavy burden with me always. It's called the Cyprus problem, and it's a part of who I am.

Turkish-Cypriot peace activist

Conflicts often arise and sustain themselves because of political aspirations, thirst for military dominance, struggle for economic advantage, quest for control of resources, and geopolitical manoeuvring by the big powers. But is there also something deeper, more human, lurking behind the scenes?

Although we must recognize the immediate and direct impacts of the more 'visible' factors such as those listed above, I believe that the hidden element in many conflicts, especially those involving different ethnic groups, is perceptions of self and other. How do the different groups see themselves? What images do they hold of the

other? How do these differences in self-perceptions and views of the other clash? How do they help create different views about the future? How is each group's view of themselves threatened by the other? Can the conflict itself become essential to how groups see themselves? I believe these and other identity-related questions are critical in promoting more effective ties across the Green Line in Cyprus.

Identity issues impact conflict situations in several ways. The conflict itself is likely to revolve around differences in how each party perceives itself, especially vis-à-vis the other. These differences in perceptions may have led to the conflict in the first place, and they usually exacerbate the separation and make reconciliation nearly impossible. Trust is shattered, accusations fly, wounds fester, hope is lost. If they have lived in close proximity in the past, each party's definition of itself includes the relationship they had together. Separation tears apart this collective identity and requires a re-definition of one's self. In order for suitable agreements to be reached between the conflicting parties, these identity issues must be addressed<sup>2</sup>.

In some ways, identity issues in Cyprus appear to be relatively straightforward. There are two well-defined geographical zones, each populated and administered primarily by a single ethnic group. Each community uses a consistent label for itself – Turkish Cypriots in the north and Greek Cypriots in the south. Turkish Cypriots are Turkish-speaking, think of themselves as secular Muslims, take pride in their Ottoman heritage, and consider themselves European in outlook and orientation. Greek Cypriots are Greek-speaking, belong to the Orthodox Christian church, take pride in being part of the Hellenic world, and orient themselves toward Europe and the West. To an outsider, it may be easy to see the Turkish Cypriots simply as part of Turkey and the Greek Cypriots as an extension of Greece – merely two 'outposts' of their respective motherlands.

The reality in Cyprus, however, is much more complicated. The multi-faceted nature of Cypriot identities and their influence on

the conflict emerged during the workshops that I facilitated with citizen peace groups during the past decade. In most of these workshops, discussion was guided by two questions, one posed for the purpose of generating and clarifying ideas and the other for exploring the relationship among the ideas. In each group we were trying to create an influence structure that represented the system of issues surrounding the topic of our discussion. In the core group with which I first worked, we initially explored the obstacles to peace-building efforts in Cyprus, followed by goals for the group's peace-building activities. In other groups we examined issues facing the youth of Cyprus, barriers to increased cooperation among young business leaders, factors that lead to pain and suffering in Cyprus, obstacles to cooperation among citizen peace groups in the region, and other topics. In none of these workshops was identity the primary topic, but in every case there were identity issues that became a major part of our discussions.

In addition to these workshops, I also facilitated several seminars that posed specific questions about identity. For example, we often addressed questions related to perceptions of the 'other,' perceptions of self, and perceptions of how the other sees you. In one of these workshops, we spent nearly six weeks exploring how participants see themselves, within their own society, and vis-à-vis one another. The main purpose of this seminar was to explore how identity issues affect the Cyprus conflict. In the initial stages of their discussion, the participants in this group generated responses to the question: 'What feelings and beliefs are associated with my identity as a Turkish Cypriot or Greek Cypriot?' As part of our discussion, we explored the major themes that ran through these statements, categorizing the responses under six headings (see Table 1).

In the following section I will explore each of these themes in greater detail, basing most of my observations on information taken from the identity seminars. It is augmented by discussions from the other workshops, as well as from the series of seminars held during July 2001 that were concerned with rapprochement in the region<sup>3</sup>.

Before continuing, it is imperative to point out that there is a great deal of variety within each community, and although these intra-group differences are often overshadowed by their allegiance to the 'national cause,' it is important to recognize that neither group can be treated as a monolithic whole. This diversity was also evident in our workshops. Sometimes the most contentious discussions took place between members of the same community rather than across ethnic lines. Thus, the descriptions I present below must be understood as general patterns that emerged from the discussions during our seminars. It is inappropriate and misleading to see individual Greek Cypriots or Turkish Cypriots as embodying all or even most of the characteristics presented in the following sections. Nevertheless, within each group there was a consensus that the beliefs and feelings we discussed are representative of the general population and are reliable guides to how people see themselves.

It is helpful to keep in mind when reading the following sections that they report perceptions that emerged from workshops and seminars held in a bi-communal setting. The results are not a product of social-scientific research about identity issues in Cyprus. Thus, one could argue that the ideas outlined below reflect primarily the views of those individuals drawn to bi-communal groups, rather than of the population as a whole. Nevertheless, the individuals in the bi-communal groups represented a broad cross-section of Cypriots, and they were asked to present what they believed to be opinions commonly found in the larger society (and not just their own personal views). Therefore, it is likely that the discussion presented below can be understood as broadly representative of the society in general. In any case, the ideas should provide a stimulus for discussion and debate, both in mono-communal and bi-communal settings.

#### CONNECTION TO MOTHERLAND

The category that emerged in the workshops as the dominant theme for both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots was the connection

TABLE 1: COMPARING IDENTITY ISSUES IN CYPRUS

Turkish Cypriots	Greek Cypriots
<b>CONNECTION TO MOTHERLAND</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Pride associated with Ottoman heritage, Turkish language, Muslim religion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Carrier of Hellenic civilization, member of Greek community, part of Orthodox religion, pride in contributions to Western civilization</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increasing uneasiness about the degree of influence exerted by Turkey over internal affairs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Confusion about relation between Greek and Cypriot heritage, distrust of Greek intentions toward Cyprus</li> </ul>
<b>ATTACHMENT TO CYPRUS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Connection to the soil, pride in richness of culture, Cypriot dialect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Connection with whole of island, attachment to place of birth, pride in Cypriot history, Cypriot dialect</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Distinction from people of Turkey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Distinction from people of Greece</li> </ul>
<b>BURDEN OF CYPRUS CONFLICT</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Suffering through many troubles, difficult to survive as a Turkish Cypriot, suppressed economic potential</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sense of incompleteness, lack of freedom to move in my island, bitter about past</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Sandwiched between Turkey and Greek Cypriots, helpless, victims of situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Always compromising, victims of international forces, weak position, strength to survive</li> </ul>
<b>RELATION TO OTHER COMMUNITY</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Treated as minority, separated by language &amp; religion, sense of insecurity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Fractured by separation</li> <li>■ Search for similarities, desire for unification</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Desire for dialogue, willingness to make peace</li> </ul>	
<b>CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Close family ties, strong sense of neighbourhood, emphasis on social events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Close family ties, strong sense of neighbourhood, emphasis on social events</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Passivity in dealing with difficult situations, tolerant of others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Peace-loving, compassionate, sentimental, hard working</li> </ul>
<b>CONNECTION TO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Identification with Europe, cosmopolitan, insufficiently aware of international issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Identification with Europe, emphasis on international law and rights, self-assured on world stage</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Misunderstood by international community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Suspicious of other cultures, blame international community for problems</li> </ul>

they felt to what they describe as their motherlands, Turkey and Greece. For the Turkish Cypriots, this connection was relatively straightforward. They saw themselves as part of a larger Turkish population that lived not only in Turkey but also in many other countries of the region. The Turkish language was an important part of their self-definition, and they found great meaning in the poetry and literature that the Turkish language made possible. They took pride in being descendents from the Ottomans, an empire they perceived as the most tolerant and multicultural in the world's history, providing some of the progressive ideas that are found in many modern nations, especially those that incorporate many cultures within their borders. Turkish Cypriots considered themselves secular Muslims, celebrating the Islamic holy days and attending to the primary rituals, such as marriage and death ceremonies, but not participating actively in worship services or following the more conservative practices related to clothing, daily prayer, attending the services of the mosque, etc. For the most part, they felt strongly aligned with the institutions and cultural life of Turkey, and they took comfort from being so close to the people from whom they descended and the land from which their forefathers immigrated nearly 400 years earlier. As will be made clearer in later sections, Turkish Cypriots also differentiated themselves from the mainlanders, especially from the religiously conservative Anatolian settlers who have come to Cyprus more recently, but their own strong connection to Turkey was undisputed.

For the Greek Cypriots, the connection they felt to their motherland was more complicated. Clearly, they saw themselves as part of Greek culture, as belonging to the larger Greek community, and as part of Greek history. They felt power in the expressiveness of the Greek language, the richness of its vocabulary, and the many poets and writers who used the language with skill and beauty to create works recognized by the world community. They took great pride in the accomplishments and contributions of the Hellenes, who are considered as providing the basis of western democracy,



philosophy, science, medicine, psychology, literature, and arts. The Orthodox Christian religion was an important aspect of their identity, providing celebrations, feast days, rituals of birth, marriage, and death, but no one described themselves as religious and few believed the Church held much influence over their daily lives. Unlike the Turkish Cypriots, however, they did not feel close to the daily life and institutions of their Greek kin, and to some extent they even felt a dislike of the Greeks, discussing how they often felt treated by them as second-class citizens. Even though they took some comfort from the promises of the Greek government to provide protection from outside threats, they did not believe the Greeks could (or would) deliver when the need arose. On the one hand, they felt a need for support and security arrangements with Greece. At the same time they were suspicious about the intentions and goodwill of Greece toward Cyprus, viewing them as directly responsible for much of the pain and frustration of the island. Finally, they expressed uncertainty about how much of their heritage was Greek and how much was due to the numerous influences from other rulers of Cyprus. Overall, despite several misgivings and confusions, the Greek Cypriots recognized their ties to the mainland and felt pride in their Greek heritage.

The difference in the Greek-Cypriot feelings toward Greece, compared to the Turkish-Cypriot feelings toward Turkey, can be explained partially by the different historical circumstances each face. The Greek influence in Cyprus goes back over 3000 years, to the time of the first Greek settlers who came to Cyprus after the Trojan war as described by Homer, while the Turkish presence in Cyprus started over 400 years ago with the Ottoman conquest of the island. While the period of Turkish influence has been relatively uninterrupted, except for the British colonial period, the Greek impact on Cyprus lies within several other layers of conquest, including Phoenician, Assyrian, Egyptian, Roman, Byzantine, Lusignian, Venetian, Ottoman, and British. Although the language and mythology remained predominately Greek, these periods have



left their mark as well. Many Greek Cypriots will point to the 'unbroken chain of Greek heritage,' but it is not always a very convincing argument, even to the Greek Cypriots themselves. In addition, the distance to the motherland is greater for the Greek Cypriots than for the Turkish Cypriots (it is 500 miles to Athens, while it is only 40 miles to the Turkish coast), and besides the practical difficulties of maintaining a close relationship with a far away neighbour, such physical distance also creates psychological distance. Another factor is the ratio of Turkish Cypriots (less than 120,000 total population) to mainland Turks (65 million inhabitants) compared to the Greek Cypriots' (650,000) relation to the inhabitants of Greece (10 million). The Greek Cypriots do not feel overwhelmed by the size of the Greek population, so it is not difficult for them to feel and act independently of Greece, while the Turkish Cypriots may feel more constrained in the face of the large population of Turkey. Finally, the Greek role in the 1974 coup that led to the Turkish intervention is openly acknowledged, and Greek Cypriots quickly condemn both this intervention in their internal affairs and the lack of Greek help in their attempt to defend themselves against the Turkish forces. By contrast, the Turkish Cypriots express gratitude to Turkey for their intervention in 1974, viewing this an act of 'salvation' for their community.

#### ATTACHMENT TO CYPRUS

In addition to the strong ties both communities feel toward their mother countries, both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots also expressed deep attachment to the island of Cyprus. The Turkish Cypriots emphasized their love for the island, their roots in the soil, their emotional attachment to the landscape and its smells, colours, sounds, and cooling winds of summer evenings. They discussed the uniqueness of their Cypriot dialect, cuisine, and many cultural traditions. They also took pride in having a separate identity from their Turkish kin, speaking about their secularism and dislike for anything too religious.

Similarly, the Greek Cypriots discussed at length their feelings of belonging to the land of the island, the human and natural aspects of the Cypriot landscape, and the emotional ties they feel to the mountains and the sea, the smell and colours of the sun and the air. They also emphasized the Cypriot dialect, in their case tracing it back to the times of Homeric Greek, emphasizing, as did the Turkish Cypriots, ways in which their culture is unique from that of the mainland Greeks. Unlike the Turkish Cypriots, they pointed to the 8000-year history of human settlement on Cyprus, recognizing that monuments were built by their ancestors prior to Greek influence. They also emphasized the international recognition given to their government and the fact that Cyprus was an independent state, allowing Cyprus to play a role on the world stage. Also, unlike the Turkish Cypriots, they talked about their unwillingness to leave the island, even when conditions are bad and the future grim. Finally, the Greek Cypriots stressed their connection with the whole of the island, and they gave special importance to the place (village and setting) of their birth.

Beyond these differences, both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots expressed very similar feelings of affection for their homeland. For both, it reflects the meaning they give to the Cypriot part of their hyphenated name. However, the differences that emerged between the Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot views are not insignificant. The latter's attention to the 8000-year history of the island is no accident – they have been taught in their history that they are the original inhabitants of the island and that the Turkish Cypriots are relative newcomers. The attention to international recognition is another part of the political nature of Greek-Cypriot identity – they derive part of their legitimacy from this legal status as the official representatives of Cyprus, and an important part of the way they see themselves has to do with this status. Finally, the emphasis Greek Cypriots gave to their connection with the whole of the island is quite different from the Turkish-Cypriot views. The Greek-Cypriot official position is that every Cypriot must have free access to the whole of

the island, and this political message has been hammered into the consciousness of every Greek Cypriot from birth. For many of them, the village of their birth (or the village of their parents) lies in Turkish-Cypriot controlled territory, and giving attention to a specific location is a way to keeping alive the political hope that one day they will have access to these places. For the Turkish Cypriots, although they may miss the place of their birth (if their home was formerly in the south), and nearly all of them want to visit places in the south that used to be important to them, few Turkish Cypriots expressed a desire to live again in those places. These differences between the two communities are major driving forces in the conflict, and they represent issues that are very difficult to resolve.

#### **BURDEN OF THE CYPRUS CONFLICT**

Very few Greek Cypriots or Turkish Cypriots have known a period without the Cyprus conflict. It has been at the forefront of their lives since the 1950s, and today it is a pervasive force that overlays much of their existence. Both groups have suffered physically and both now suffer psychologically. Although the Cyprus conflict impacts strongly on the identity of both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, it does so in different ways. For the Turkish Cypriots, an important part of their identity is the struggle to survive as a community. They see themselves as having endured a great deal of suffering over the years at the hands the Greek Cypriots, and they are constantly reminded of the events that caused this suffering. They hold within themselves a feeling that they are victims of grave injustice, that they have been persecuted by many forces. For the Turkish Cypriots, they believe strongly that their community deserves better, both in term of recognition as a community and in economic opportunities.

For the Greek Cypriots, identity is also tied to struggle, but their fight is for justice that will address the wrongs committed against them in the past. They see themselves as suffering, but the cause of their troubles is primarily Turkey and the international

community, not the Turkish Cypriots. They feel divided, incomplete, and without freedom (to move freely and settle within Cyprus). There is a lot of bitterness about the past and uncertainty about the future. They see themselves as constantly compromising in the interest of peace, putting themselves in a weak position at the bargaining table.

Despite the similarities at one level, the differences in Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot views of themselves vis-à-vis the Cyprus conflict is one of the primary forces that keeps the conflict alive. The Turkish Cypriots' struggle to survive as a community is pitted against the Greek Cypriots' struggle to exercise their individual rights. The Turkish Cypriots' feelings toward the Greek Cypriots for the suffering they caused is ignored by the Greek Cypriots in their emphasis on outside forces (primarily Turkey) as the cause of suffering in Cyprus. The constraints that the Turkish Cypriots feel because of their international isolation are incompatible with the Greek-Cypriot belief that they (the Greek Cypriots) have to be constantly alert to the danger of the world community accepting the status quo as the starting point for a solution, leaving them in an even weaker position. In the meantime, there is a general 'heaviness,' caused by the existence of the unresolved conflict, which pervades the psychological and social well-being of all Cypriots and their views of themselves.

#### RELATION TO THE OTHER COMMUNITY

The Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots have lived together on the same small island for over 400 years, and the ties they have with one another form a crucial backbone of their identity. For the Turkish Cypriots, there is a clear awareness of the ways in which language and religion separate them from the Greek Cypriots. There was some discussion about the existence of an inferiority complex, brought about by so many years of being dominated economically, politically, and culturally. Turkish Cypriots expressed a feeling of insecurity toward Greek Cypriots, feeling threatened by this larger community, and they saw a need to

protect themselves from the prejudice and abuse that used to happen regularly. There was a strong dislike for being treated today as a minority by the Greek Cypriots. At the same time, there was a strong desire to have more dialogue, to directly communicate and engage in trade, and to find ways to live peacefully side by side.

The Greek Cypriots emphasized their similarities with Turkish Cypriots, along with an explicit recognition that they seldom thought about differences. They expressed a desire to co-exist with the Turkish Cypriots, to live together with their neighbours in peace. There was a strong dislike for any form of artificial separation between the two communities, and they saw themselves as constantly fighting for individual rights, both their own and their neighbours’.

It was clear that neither of the communities feels ‘complete’ without the other, but this seemed truer for the Greek Cypriots than for the Turkish Cypriots. Because of their minority status (numerically, economically, and politically), the Turkish Cypriots had always been aware of their differences from the Greek Cypriots, and they had long taken these dissimilarities as a matter of fact. For the Greek Cypriots, however, who were the ruling majority for much of the twentieth century, the differences between themselves and the Turkish Cypriots have been more or less overlooked and/or ignored. In many ways, the basic difference in how each group sees themselves vis-à-vis the other fuels the conflict, leading to incompatible positions about how the two communities should relate to one another. The Greek Cypriots’ insistence on ‘living together’ on the island is in direct opposition to the Turkish Cypriot assertion that the only future for Cyprus is an arrangement with appropriate safeguards that allows the two neighbours to live securely and peacefully ‘side by side.’

#### CULTURAL CHARACTERISTICS

In spite of speaking a different language, following a different religion, and holding such different views of history and the current

situation, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots share many common cultural characteristics. In each community, individuals define themselves within the context of family ties, and personal identity is closely linked to parents, siblings, and relatives. Neighbourhood is also important, and the character and history of the place where individuals reside helps determine how they see themselves. Emphasis is given in both communities to helping neighbours and others in need. At the same time, people are curious about the affairs of their neighbours, and both sides said there is a tendency to talk about others 'behind their back.' For both groups, much of life revolves around social activities, and food is a central feature of social gatherings. Although there are a few differences in the cuisine of each community, for the most part the diet is the same, and everyone will point quickly to their favorite Cypriot foods such as halloumi and 'souvla'. In each community, people see themselves as friendly to others, hospitable to guests, and eager to learn about others.

Music, dance, and art are integral parts of social life among both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, and they tend to have the same or similar dance costumes, instruments, melodies, and forms of artistic expression. Each group pointed to their love of 'tsifteteli,' a popular dance and music that has origins in the Middle East. Both groups discussed their tendency to treat time in a somewhat casual manner, especially their habits of being late for events and doing things 'at the last minute.' There are many common nonverbal expressions, quite a few shared words and phrases, and numerous communication habits that are identical – both groups pointed out that several people are usually talking together at the same time in social conversations (and other settings) and that most social visits end with a long conversation at the gate, even if it is already very late at night (something I experienced myself many times!). Finally, Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots both value humour, placing emphasis on telling jokes, and they consider themselves to have a good sense of humour toward events and toward other people.

The primary cultural characteristics that separate the two

communities relate to activity orientation and emotional expression. The Turkish Cypriots saw themselves as somewhat passive in responding to external events, and they considered themselves as having a relaxed approach to life. They talked about their ability to ‘forgive and forget’ wrongdoings against them. While they considered themselves emotional, they are careful about publicly displaying their emotions too strongly. The Greek Cypriots, on the other hand, saw themselves as taking a more proactive approach to situations, as impatient, and as future-oriented. They see themselves as sentimental, quick-tempered, and emotionally expressive. They have trouble letting go of past wrongs that others have done against them, and they feel bitter about the way they have been treated by the outside world. These differences in approach to action and in expression of emotion have created many misunderstandings when Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots attempt to work together.

#### CONNECTION TO INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Although neither Turkish Cypriots nor Greek Cypriots generated many individual items about how they see themselves in relation to the rest of the world, the similarities and differences in their views are central aspects of the Cyprus conflict. One consistent component of both groups’ view of self is their European orientation. Despite the location of Cyprus in the eastern Mediterranean, in close proximity to countries such as Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries, the Cypriots clearly position themselves as part of the Western world. There is actually a physical connection to the West – two large British sovereign military bases are located in Greek-Cypriot controlled territory. In addition, Greek Cypriots receive over two million tourists every year, most of them British and northern Europeans. Even the Turkish Cypriots, who are Muslim by religion, turn away from the Arab world and towards Europe. While there is some acknowledgement of Middle Eastern influences on their culture, Cypriots are vigorous in defending their Western lifestyle and ways of thinking, as well as their political connections to

Europe, Britain, and the United States. This probably comes from several factors -- the many years they were a British colony, the large number of Cypriots currently living in Europe (especially London) and the United States, the fact that many students have studied abroad, and their recent entry into the European Union.

Beyond the similarities, however, the type of connection each community holds to the Western world is quite different. The Turkish Cypriots feel frustrated by their inability to make the rest of the world understand their situation. They don't easily trust the West to deal with them fairly, since it has a history of prejudice toward Islam. They can't understand why the international community refuses to recognize their political legitimacy and fails to acknowledge the reality of the division of Cyprus. The Greek Cypriots, although their standard of living is not very different from those found in most European and U.S. cities, have tended to maintain a non-aligned position toward the West. While they rely on the U.S. and Europe for political support and economic trade, they are suspicious of the intentions of the West, particularly those of the United States, which they perceive as favouring Turkey.

#### IDENTITY AND INTERDEPENDENCE IN THE CYPRUS CONFLICT

While one must be careful in drawing analogies between vastly different situations, the Cyprus conflict has many characteristics of a married couple seeking legal divorce. When such separation occurs between married couples in contemporary Western societies, it is usually difficult and almost always painful, but it can allow each person to go her or his own way, finding new opportunities and building a new life. It is not so easy, however, to just walk away from a marriage and begin anew, because the divorce situation is complicated by the interdependence that exists between the marriage partners. Frequently, children are involved and both parents want custody, or the couple lives in a small town and neither can move away easily, or both work for the same organization and cannot change jobs effortlessly. Additionally, they may own joint



property, such as the house they built together, or they may have established an estate that cannot be easily broken into separate pieces and divided between the two sides. Quite often, one of the parties is in a stronger position economically (e.g., one spouse may have a full-time salary while the other has never had a full-time job outside the home, leaving this person with few opportunities for gainful employment). It is not unusual for the separation to be initiated by one of the parties against the wishes of the other, with the aggrieved party denying the difficulties that led to the break-up and at the same time harbouring illusions of bringing the marriage back together 'like it was before.' The situation is sometimes exacerbated by the parents of the couple, especially if these different sets of parents don't get along with each other. In most situations, friends or colleagues of the couple are drawn into the conflict, and although these friends previously may have had a good relationship with the couple as a unit, they are now pressured to 'choose sides' and lend their support to one or the other. The list of complicating factors could continue, but it is easy to see that such situations can involve a host of variables that are not easy to sort out or resolve.

In the case of Cyprus, the situation is complicated by many factors similar to the ones listed above. After a short partnership in governing the island, disagreements and difficulties led to fighting, and an initial cease-fire has turned into a de facto separation. Inter-communal violence has ceased, but no agreement has been reached on matters that divide the parties – who will control which territory on the island, how the parties will share power and responsibility in matters that concern everyone, what guarantees will be put in place for security, how the weaker party will be protected from economic and cultural domination by the stronger side. The Greek Cypriots want to turn back the clock to recreate the situation before the war, when they were the dominant group, while the Turkish Cypriots insist that the separation is final – at last they can build their own institutions without the interference of the Greek Cypriots. The motherlands of the two communities are traditional enemies, and

although they promise to ‘protect’ the respective communities from aggression by the other, Cyprus suffers continuously from their interference in its internal affairs. External parties, such as the United States, Britain, and the European Union, are trying to help broker an agreement, but each side feels that the other is favoured by the outside party.

Like the married couple seeking a legal divorce, the two communities of Cyprus find themselves in a position of interdependence. Identity issues divide them but also tie them to each other. The conflict has become an integral part of both individual and community identity. Because war and forced division, rather than a natural process of relocation over time, created the geographical zones in which the two communities of Cyprus live, the conflict is an unsettled presence that permeates society. It is nearly impossible to carry on a conversation for any length of time (on almost any topic) with either a Greek Cypriot or Turkish Cypriot without the conflict entering the discussion.

The dominance of the conflict in the individual and collective psyche affects the society in an interesting manner – it serves to heighten or even strengthen individuals’ sense of self-importance. The international community has devoted much attention to Cyprus, and it is doubtful that this small island would have received such interest from the world community if the conflict did not exist. It is not uncommon to hear Cypriots (of both communities) say (only half-jokingly) that Cyprus is the center of the world, but this perception would be more difficult to maintain without the existence of a conflict that receives constant notice from Europe and the United States. The news media in Cyprus give daily headline coverage to even the most insignificant statements by special envoys, ambassadors, politicians, and almost any other outsider who mentions Cyprus in the text of their remarks. It is ironic that outside Cyprus few people know anything about the conflict (or even where Cyprus is located), while in Cyprus one easily gets the impression that the world’s attention is focused on the most recent developments about the Cyprus conflict.

At the same time, the crucial role played by the Cyprus conflict creates many problems in the everyday life of Cypriots in both communities. The psychological burden is enormous, and most people suffer emotionally from the unresolved feelings associated with the 1974 events and from the fear that war will come again. Uncertainty, anxiety, insecurity, and pessimism abound in Cyprus, and these negative feelings affect family life, worker productivity, and political decisions about economic, environmental, educational, and almost all other issues. The attention given to the conflict also allows Cypriots to avoid or ignore many of the social problems that face their society. Domestic violence, mental depression, treatment of foreign guest workers, environmental problems, and other concerns can be easily shoved aside by politicians who use the 'national cause' as an excuse to focus on other issues.

Finally, identity concerns help keep the conflict alive in Cyprus. Differences in how the two communities define themselves make it very difficult for the conflict to be resolved. Like marital separations, which seldom end harmoniously, each side in Cyprus blames the other for the break-up, trust has disappeared from the relationship, tension is high, and communication with one another has broken off. Although many attempts have been made to re-establish the relationship, there seems to be little hope for the 'marriage' resuming, certainly not in its previous form. However, there is hope that the two sides can work out an amicable agreement that allows them to share the island without constant tension, fear, and the psychological burden of a failed partnership.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter is based on a paper (Broome, 2004) that is part of a recent book on identity (see references for full citation).

<sup>2</sup> In the social sciences, identity has been an important construct since George Herbert Mead's *Mind, Self, and Society* (1934). In recent years, the study of identity has assumed greater importance in intercultural communication. For a discussion of identity in various cultural contexts, see Tanno and Gonzalez (1998). Collier (1998) provides a good overview of various approaches to studying identity issues.

<sup>3</sup> I am referring to the series of four-party seminars supported by the Bi-communal Development Programme during summer 2001 (see acknowledgements for more detailed description of these seminars).



## 7. TAKING STEPS TOWARD SUCCESS

It's never easy to make things work smoothly in the bi-communal setting. We all have good intentions, but in groups it doesn't always work out the way you think it should. However, I've learned that there are many things I can do to make the process better. For me, learning to listen was the biggest task – we're not used to doing much of that in Cyprus!

Greek-Cypriot psychologist

I've been through dozens of training programs in conflict resolution, mediation, consensus building, and inter-group communication, all of which were extremely useful. Even so, I often manage to say things that create difficulties in the group – old habits die hard! I've found there's no guarantee of success. But we have to learn from our mistakes.

Turkish-Cypriot teacher

Conflict can be managed productively only if both parties take specific steps toward resolving the issues that separate them from one another. The distortion of the past, the negative images of the other community, the placement of blame on the other, the lack of trust between the two sides, and the unwillingness to make concessions all hamper efforts to work together productively. I believe the past must

be confronted honestly, but the focus must turn to creating a viable working relationship for the future. Many issues can make this shift difficult, if not impossible. If people feel that their identity is under siege, if they feel insecure, if they don't feel acknowledged and respected, if they feel wronged – they will become defensive, accusatory, and provocative, preventing the very actions that are necessary to look ahead. On the other hand, if threat can be removed, if respect can be demonstrated, and if confidence can be built, the relationship can be redefined and the two sides can learn to work together cooperatively.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to lay out a series of simple procedures that will ensure success in intercultural relationships. There are too many forces beyond our control, and every encounter is a unique combination of people and circumstances. And occasionally there are people in a group whose main purpose is to disrupt the communication or block progress in a project. Nevertheless, based on experiences of those who have been involved in joint projects during the past decade, as well as academic literature on intercultural communication and conflict resolution, it is clear that there are certain principles that underlie successful cross-community relationships, and individuals can take steps that will increase the likelihood of positive outcomes. With this in mind, the following sections will offer a number of suggestions to facilitate communication in the bi-communal setting. These will be organized around the primary tasks facing all groups: establishing trust, creating a safe environment for dialogue, and working together productively.

### ESTABLISHING TRUST

No relationship can last long without the existence of mutual trust. Lack of confidence in the intentions of the other leads to continuous questioning of each other's motives. Suspicions, misgivings, and scepticism make it impossible to work together or live together peacefully. Mistrust causes us to live behind protective shields, hiding our true feelings, making it difficult for others to get to know us.

Trust, on the other hand, makes it possible to develop a climate of openness and security, in which true sharing can take place. It allows us to differentiate between the individual human beings that make up the other community, separating them from the official stances stated by authorities for public consumption. Of course, increased trust in a few individuals does not eliminate the overall distrust of the other's authorities and their intentions vis-à-vis one's own community, but in the long run, it gives us a more sophisticated understanding of the other community and makes it easier for us to support ideas that move the peace process forward.

Although it may never be easy to reach a state of complete confidence in the other, it is essential to recognize, acknowledge, and respect each other's view of self. If parties are able to deal with identity matters in a positive way, they can start to tear down some of the fences that have kept them apart. The following are actions that can help build trust:

■ Promote a more balanced view of the past.

It would be misleading to suggest that anyone can be completely objective about the past, but the deliberate distortion of history to serve primarily political purposes creates unnecessary division and presents a serious obstacle to reconciliation. Generally, both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots are very selective in their memory of past events, and their description of these events is far from objective. The past has been distorted beyond recognition by the educational systems and political propaganda of both sides. Such one-sided interpretations of historical events push the two communities further apart and allow little room for healing processes.

Inter-communal contacts offer opportunities to hear other sides to the story, to listen to a different interpretation of the past. We can help each other understand the distortions and to correct the misperceptions that are widespread in each community. We can learn that the view of events we have come to accept as the 'truth' is biased and one-sided. By listening to another viewpoint, we can

begin to understand our own history better, and we might develop a desire for correcting our own community's interpretation and presentation of the 'facts.'

■ Acknowledge that both communities share mutual responsibility for the Cyprus conflict.

If there has been one consistent characteristic of the Cyprus conflict during the past forty years, it is the attempt of each side to place blame on the other for 'starting' the conflict, for instigating various provocative events, for the breakdown of negotiations, etc. Each side consistently and predictably accuses the other of acting in bad faith, being untrustworthy, taking actions to harm the other, putting up roadblocks in the way of progress, and spreading lies and misinformation about the 'true' situation. This kind of blaming places each of the parties in a defensive position, causing each to focus on attacking the other rather than acknowledging its own responsibility for creating and maintaining the situation. Such blaming actions quickly spiral into a mutually destructive exchange of accusations, making it impossible for the two sides to consider concessions to the other. It is interesting to note that in the political negotiations, nearly every time that one side accepts something, the other rejects it, even in cases where they might have already accepted the same ideas in the past. And then each blames the other for the breakdown!

It is rare that full responsibility for a problem can be attributed solely to one party. In Cyprus the case can be made easily that both parties share the blame equally (along with outside powers). In order to make progress, this cycle of mutual blame and accusations must be broken. At least one of the parties must be willing to make unqualified offers to the other side, and the other side must receive this offer as genuine. Until each party acknowledges the pain they have brought to the other and the role they have played in escalating the tension, it will be impossible to reach a satisfactory agreement to resolve the conflict.

If parties are able to publicly recognize their ‘mistakes’ and take responsibility for past actions, threat will be reduced to each side’s identity, making it much easier to approach the conflict in a positive manner. Such acknowledgement can help create an atmosphere where all views can be heard and respected, making it much easier for parties to work together in resolving issues. In an atmosphere of trust, participants are able to understand the complexity of the conflict, and they learn that simplistic ‘finger pointing’ is of no value in promoting realistic solutions to the conflict.

■ Help each other deal with the pain and suffering of the past. The psychological burden carried by people in both communities is one of the major barriers to reconciliation. War injures people, and it leaves scars. Sometimes the wounds caused by conflicts never heal, particularly when people are pulled apart against their will. The injuries, the scars, and the open wounds become part of the identity of the victims, and they result in bitterness toward the other that cannot go away on its own. Often, only reconciliation can remove the pain of the past.

The Turkish Cypriots do not easily forget their past treatment as second-class citizens, particularly during the period 1963-1974, when they were confined to small enclaves and feared for their safety anytime they travelled outside these protected areas. Many have lost relatives, including immediate family members, friends, and neighbours, who ‘disappeared’ or who were victims of raids on villages. No one in the Turkish-Cypriot community wants to live through such a time again. Many of the Turkish Cypriots who lived prior to 1974 in the south of Cyprus did not want to leave their homes, but they felt they had no choice. Since 1974, Turkish Cypriots have faced other difficulties, resulting from non-recognition and an economic embargo, that they continue to blame on the Greek Cypriots. They live constantly in a state of uncertainty about what will happen in the future and whether or not they will be forced once again to move and start over. The pain that has resulted from these



bad memories and anxieties about the future weigh heavily in their willingness to cooperate with Greek Cypriots.

Similarly, Greek Cypriots suffered a traumatic shock in 1974, being pushed out of their homes and away from their land and businesses, and witnessing the killings, rapes, and destruction that accompanied the advance of the Turkish army. The agony from having family members and relatives still unaccounted for, and the deep desire to return to their homes and communities, haunts the entire Greek-Cypriot community. The sense of injustice and the feelings of helplessness follow them on a daily basis and bring anger, resentment, and feelings of revenge. It is often expressed as ultranationalist rhetoric that simply deepens the pain. For many, the simple act of meeting with Turkish Cypriots is seen as a betrayal to those who have suffered. For some, bi-communal meetings signify 'giving in' to injustice and wrongdoing.

This pain, suffered by both communities and attributed to each by the other, cannot be overcome by simply blaming it on the other community, 'punishing' the other community, or calling for a return to previous conditions. Neither can the wrongs of the past be 'righted' by simply changing or legitimizing the current situation. The emotional trauma must be addressed by giving individuals the opportunity to meet with members of the other community and discuss their feelings together. These discussions cannot undo the past wrongs, but they can help lift the burden that prevents creativity and forward movement. Even those who remember the past situation more favourably are weighted down by feelings of inconsistency. They wonder how it was possible to destroy what they believed was the previous harmony, and even though they blame external forces, there is a nagging guilt associated with the possibility that they contributed to this situation by their own well-intentioned but thoughtless actions. As long as each community is mired in the past, it will be impossible to make progress.

In order to construct a shared future, individuals in both communities must be willing to share their own pain in a productive

manner, and they must be willing to listen to the feelings of the other. There must be acknowledgment of responsibility for what happened in the past, and the public discourse in both communities must change so that the needs and concerns of both communities are taken into account. Provocative actions that heighten tensions only reinforce the pain for both sides, and all attempts to bring harm on the other only speed up the spiral of self-inflicted suffering. If the animosity toward the other can be purged from one's identity, it is likely that the damage from conflict can be repaired, providing an opportunity to frame the other as a fellow human being who has also suffered long enough.

#### CONSTRUCTING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR DIALOGUE

When speaking about bi-communal activities with my Greek-Cypriot friends who have not been involved in any of these events, one of the most common statements that I have heard goes something like this: 'If the Turkish troops left Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots would have no trouble getting along with one another.' Although this statement greatly masks the complexity of the situation, our own experience in bi-communal activities has shown that members of the two communities can speak easily with one another and can readily form friendly relations in social situations. Rarely do major disputes arise during either social gatherings or in workshop settings. However, there is equal truth in the contentions of some Turkish-Cypriot academics and politicians that the real problem between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots lies not at the individual level, where friendly relations are not difficult, but at the community level, where the Turkish Cypriots have been badly mistreated by the Greek Cypriots.

My own conclusion is somewhat different from either of these positions. On the one hand, I have learned that polite conversation and friendly relations are not the same as mutual understanding, respect, and ability to work together. I've come to believe that the initial friendliness of most bi-communal gatherings exists at only a

surface level and is made possible by the natural politeness of Cypriots and the resistance, especially by Turkish Cypriots, to confrontation in social gatherings. At the same time, I have learned that productive dialogue is possible, both at the individual and the community level, when the appropriate conditions exist. In order for productive dialogue to take place, it is important to provide a 'safe space' in which people can share their views in an open yet structured manner without fear of attack and free from the worry about politicization of every issue. Mechanisms must be provided that allow systematic movement from initial statements of concern towards deeper exploration of difficult issues. Much work needs to be done to help build trust and to create a sense of interpersonal 'safety.'

I have seen time and again the relational damage that can be done when people are simply placed in the same room and expected to find ways to overcome decades of misinformation and lack of trust. They often have no choice but to utilize the rhetoric of their own side's propaganda, without realizing the effects it has on the other person and on relations between the communities. Of course, progress is seldom possible without difficulties, and even with the most carefully designed plan of activities, there are many delicate moments when the whole process is on the verge of falling apart. However, the more the groups have worked together to build trusting relationships, the more difficult it is for a single incident to unravel the group. In a situation such as that in Cyprus, where there has been such a long period of separation, these trusting relationships are not likely to happen without some assistance. Members of both communities must work extremely hard to deal with the burden of past traumas.

Groups often have difficulty engaging in productive discussions because the atmosphere is full of anxiety and apprehension. People feel insecure and the group climate becomes tense. This is often caused by fear, which is one of the primary driving forces behind defensiveness. If a group feels threatened, it will retreat from the other and build protective walls. Whether the

threat comes from physical violence, political control, economic domination, or loss of cultural traditions, the reaction is the same. In order for a relationship to work productively, the fear of such possibilities must be removed. The following steps can help create a safe climate in which meaningful dialogue can take place.

■ Listen to learn.

Most of us are used to hearing people tell us: ‘You have to learn to listen.’ While all of us recognize that this admonition has some merit, most of us don’t know how to accomplish the task. The study of listening is widespread in the social sciences – there is even an academic quarterly called *The International Journal of Listening*. As you can imagine, the literature is full of suggestions for how to develop better listening skills, and there are numerous training programs to help people become better listeners. There is no assurance, however, that even if one were to go through extensive training, she or he would see the results desired, disappointing those who originally told us to learn to listen!

Fortunately, there is a way to ‘learn to listen,’ and unlike most of the guidelines I have offered in this book, I believe this one is relatively simple. The ‘secret’ is to turn the phrase around and ‘listen to learn,’ especially when we disagree with someone or find ourselves in conflict with another person. Most of the time, in such situations we listen so that we can refute, correct, or challenge what someone has said. Or we listen in order to better prove our point. In this case, the goal of listening becomes one of changing the other’s opinion. In these situations, it is likely that we will learn very little, and neither will the other person. No one has gained much, except perhaps we have the satisfaction of hearing ourselves talk!

If we listen to learn, on the other hand, we create the possibility of transforming the situation so that everyone gains. We will hear very different things from the other when we are in a learning mode, both because our receptivity increases and because the other’s willingness to share increases. When the other person is

not listening, we tend to get stuck in our opinions, stating them over and over (and sometimes louder and louder!), hoping that they will eventually get through. However, when we see an indication that the other is learning, then we are willing to go further, explaining more about our opinion. As the listener, we develop a more sophisticated understanding of the other's views, placing us in a better position to create our own thoughts, and more importantly, building a climate where more productive dialogue can take place.

■ Convey more positive images of the other community.

It is difficult to share a small geographical area with someone you don't like, respect, or consider as your equal, and it is especially difficult if the other is considered your enemy. Both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots tend to paint a negative image of each other. The general Turkish-Cypriot description of Greek Cypriots is especially harsh, often portraying the Greek Cypriots as suppressors and murderers. Although there is acknowledgment of the 'good Greek Cypriots,' the all-too-common image is one of extremists intent on exterminating the Turkish Cypriots.

At first glance it might seem that the Greek Cypriots are less negative in their portrayals of the Turkish Cypriots, especially given the often-heard references to the kindness of Turkish-Cypriot neighbours and their affection for certain individuals. However, it becomes clear upon closer examination that the Turkish Cypriots are not viewed with respect or equality. Such images of the other do not make it easy to enter into productive negotiations about issues that divide communities.

Through participation in structured bi-communal discussion groups, it is possible to encounter members of the other community as fellow human beings rather than as objects of hatred or contempt. Turkish Cypriots might learn that their neighbours on the other side of the Buffer Zone are usually well-intentioned, even though they make mistakes. Greek Cypriots might come to accept Turkish Cypriots as equals – intellectually, socially, and culturally. Both sides

can do away with the extreme images that have been promoted in their media and educational system, adopting a more realistic picture of the other community. Hopefully, they will realize that a wide variety of views and intentions exist in both communities, and that the stereotypes and prejudices that have dominated thinking about the other are both counterproductive and dangerous.

### ■ Create Shared Empathy.

Empathy, we are told, is something that helps us understand others. We have been taught to ‘empathize with’ the situation of friends going through difficult times or who face a tough road ahead. We learn that we should ‘put ourselves in his/her place’ in order to understand how the other feels. Certainly these are laudable actions, and they can promote positive human relationships. However, in a conflict such as the one in Cyprus, these acts rarely happen. One might argue that empathy is impossible in this case. How do you ‘empathize’ with people who have caused you so much pain and suffering? How is it possible to ‘put yourself in the other’s place’ if you have no contact with them? Clearly, a situation such as Cyprus demands more than our simplistic notions of empathy can provide. But is it an irrelevant concept?

Fortunately, there is another way to view empathy<sup>1</sup>. Instead of treating it as something one has for another or does to another, it can be considered something that individuals create together. In this way, the focus shifts from the individual to the relationship. The question is no longer one of seeing the world through another’s eyes. Rather, the task is one of creating mutual understanding, which is usually something different than either party holds alone. In this way, my own truth is not threatened, and although I might change the way I see things, we make efforts to construct a truth that we both can share. Such an outcome forms the basis for a solid working relationship. There is no magic way to create shared empathy, but steps like those outlined in the following sections can go a long way toward this goal.

### WORKING TOGETHER PRODUCTIVELY

The natural tendency in protracted conflict situations is to protect one's hard-earned rights, to keep the other away, to prevent encroachment on one's territory, or to push for access to what is 'rightfully' yours. Demands and denials rule the day, and tension remains high. Although the two parties in a conflict may have ended their former partnership, such behaviours are counterproductive, and they need to find a way to deal with matters that concern the two of them. This means establishing a new partnership, based on new principles.

Moving from prolonged conflict toward a workable relationship is not easy, and it requires both sides to work together on many tasks. It is necessary for everyone to start thinking seriously about how they will coexist, how they will share what cannot be divided, and how they will work together to take care of tasks that must be co-administered. Many attempts will fail, but there must be a continual effort to move forward. The following suggestions won't guarantee success, but they will facilitate the process of working together:

- Recognize the complexity of the situation.

Conflicts are never simple, yet they almost always get framed in 'either-or,' 'us-them,' or 'right-wrong' terms. 'Our side' is justified in its actions and the other side is obstructing progress. The impulse is to rally around a single cause and to portray the other as a uniform evil. Under such conditions, common interests cannot be discovered, and joint actions will never be taken. On the other hand, if each side can begin to see the other in differentiated terms, and if both of them can identify the multiplicity of factors that complicate the situation, they will be able to confront the conflict in much more realistic and practical terms.

- Focus on the future.

In protracted conflicts, there is a tendency to become locked in the past, blocking the ability of groups to envision a future they could

share. Entombed in a poisoned past, parties are unable to get beyond a period that no longer exists. Although the past can never be ignored, and even though it may be painful to discuss and difficult to acknowledge, it is counterproductive to dwell exclusively on the past. Life takes place in the future, and until the parties are willing to discuss what lies ahead, they will never be able to go there creatively. Once they direct their thinking toward how their relationship will look when they are no longer in conflict, former opponents will be able to redefine themselves and the way in which they will work together under new arrangements.

In the bi-communal groups, individuals from both communities have met together consistently over a period of several years, engaged in productive dialogue on difficult issues, and produced analyses, projects, and plans that have the backing of the full group. These groups have experienced difficulties, at times falling into the trap of mistrust that characterizes the larger society, but they've managed to work through their differences and tear down some of the walls that separated them across community lines. Their work clearly demonstrates that, if the proper setting is created and if individuals adopt a constructive attitude, it is possible to replace the cycle of blame and accusation with one of mutual trust and understanding. Nothing could be more critical for the future of Cyprus.

■ Show a willingness to make positive moves.

Often progress in conflicts is stalled not so much because of what one party or the other says or does as it is by what they fail to say or do. Although both Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots sometimes use the rhetoric of cooperation, neither has a habit of offering suggestions that might help defuse the tension. Each side has been afraid of taking the first step toward building confidence. However, no deadlock can be broken until one side or the other makes the first conciliatory gesture. Parties in conflict often remain in a stalemate because each is waiting for the other to make the first positive move. Sometimes both sides are afraid that if they take the first step, the



other will take advantage of them. If each side maintains a hard-line stance, it offers no way for the other to take positive steps that might relax the situation and lead to a positive climate for negotiation.

The future can never be certain, and the consequences of one's actions are never predetermined, but unless one or both parties are able to take steps that offer something useful to the other, both will remain mired in a quicksand that continues to pull them downward. Taking risks can lead to unintended consequences, and sometimes can even be dangerous, but if either or both sides are willing to 'step out on a limb,' they break the deadlock and encourage other beneficial moves.

Once participants have lost some of their fear of the other, it becomes much easier for them to promote actions that send positive messages to the other community. Members of bi-communal groups are in an excellent position to see the effects of their side's hard-line policies on the other community and how these play into the hands of the extremists. It becomes clear how certain policies and actions can be damaging for accomplishing the very goals they are intended to advance. It is important to realize that strength comes from a willingness to reach out towards the other as much as it does from attempts to push the other away. When someone offers a move toward peace, it opens a small window to the future, through which the other might follow.

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<sup>1</sup> See Broome (1993) for a description of what I refer to as "relational empathy," a concept that was developed for application in intercultural contexts and conflict situations. This concept undergirds most of the work in which I am engaged as third-party facilitator.



## 8. SHAPING THE FUTURE

I'm afraid that all these groups that meet with Turkish Cypriots simply divert attention from the real problem for our future, which is the Turkish occupation of our country. What difference can bi-communal activities make in the face of 40,000 Turkish troops?

Greek-Cypriot official

The only future for Cyprus is a divided one, and nothing positive can result from these meetings with the Greeks. If we are not careful, we will lose all the gains we have made in the past 25 years, and the sacrifices we have made will be for nothing.

Turkish-Cypriot official

It is not likely that even the most dedicated and committed of the original core group of bi-communal participants could have articulated fully the potential benefits of their work. They simply knew it was the 'right thing to do,' or they felt strongly compelled to do something in the face of continued stagnation at the political level. By looking back, however, it is possible to see numerous ways in which their actions have contributed positively to the situation in Cyprus. Whether you are participating actively in organized bi-

communal meetings, working on a technical committee that involved members of both communities, or simply coming into casual contact with the other side, it can help to have these contributions in mind. Such awareness will allow you to go forward with the knowledge that in addition to the personal learning that comes from working together with the other side, you are helping to build the future of Cyprus.

The tangible results from bi-communal activities are difficult to measure. Because of the constraints imposed by the political situation, bi-communal activities have not led to large-scale joint business ventures, integrated schools, island-wide projects, exchange programs for professionals, or joint media stations, all of which are projects that could help build a stronger future for a bi-communal partnership at the state level. Nevertheless, there are three specific ways in which the bi-communal activities have had a direct and visible impact.

First, until April 2003, they provided the only real corridor through the physical barrier of the Buffer Zone. Without the bi-communal activities, practically no contact would have occurred across community lines over a thirty-year period. Second, the existence of so many bi-communal groups and their unceasing demand for more contact, along with international support for their efforts, had an influence on the decision taken by the Turkish-Cypriot authorities to partially lift restrictions to travel across the Buffer Zone in 2003. Although there were many political factors that led to this new policy, the growing presence of a strong opposition (many of whom had been actively involved in bi-communal activities) that favoured an increase in contacts undoubtedly played a role in the thinking of the Turkish-Cypriot leadership. Third, a close examination of the U.N.'s Annan Plan for negotiating a political settlement shows that it includes several ideas initially developed in the bi-communal seminars and workshops. Several of the U.N. personnel who played a role in writing the Annan Plan had attended one or more of these workshops, and they had read reports from other bi-communal groups, so it is only natural that these ideas would find their way into the Plan.

Beyond their more visible impacts on the resolution of the conflict, the bi-communal activities and cross-community contacts have contributed, or have the potential to contribute, in ways that are not so easily quantified. Some of these 'hidden' impacts are personal and psychological, others are social and cultural, and a few may not be realized until well into the future. The remainder of this section will list and describe these less tangible impacts of reaching across the Green Line in Cyprus.

### SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

■ Understanding the fears, hopes, and concerns of the other community. By preventing contact between ordinary Cypriots, the physical barrier of the Buffer Zone created an even more damaging psychological barrier between the two sides. Relations between the two communities have deteriorated since 1955, with the start of the EOKA campaign for 'enosis' and the corresponding establishment of TMT. There is no guarantee that relations would have improved had the society remained integrated, but it is very clear that the two communities have grown further apart since the dividing lines were established in 1963 and 1974. Even during the worst of times prior to 1974, there were a few people who maintained strong ties between the two communities. As long as these examples of partnership existed, there was hope that better overall relations could develop. However, without any contact the fears, hopes, and concerns of each community would have been completely lost to the other side. The bi-communal activities provided a means to keep alive some understanding of the other community, opening for a small group of people a window into the world of the other. Without this insight, it is not possible to make informed choices about the future, even if that future is living on a divided island.

■ Reducing the psychological burden from past events. Memories of episodes that took place between 1955-1974 dominate the minds of many people in Cyprus. Those who lost family members, had to leave their homes and means of livelihood, witnessed massacres,

bombings, rapes, and other acts of violence, or lived as refugees cannot easily lay aside mental images of these horrors. Even the younger generation, who did not directly experience such incidents, are confronted with them on a daily basis through stories from their parents, lessons in school, and constant renditions in the newspapers, radio programs and television specials. The psychological burden imposed by images of the past weighs heavily on the minds of all Cypriots, creating a pathology that permeates society. The weight does not lessen with time, although it may take a different form. The separation in Cyprus magnifies the effects of this burden, and the bi-communal activities provide one of the few means to find relief. The pain cannot be erased, but it can be dealt with in a healthier manner by meeting individuals from the other community as fellow human beings and residents of the same island, by exchanging stories of the past and hopes for the future, and by working together in building that future.

■ Creating a forum in which difficult issues can be discussed productively. There is no shortage of discussions about political topics in Cyprus, but most of them tend to polarise the issues rather than help to resolve them. When politicians, educators, journalists, church leaders, and taxi-drivers present their views on the core issues, their rhetoric is often positional posturing that elicits even stronger statements from the other side. Issues such as identity concerns, property matters, security, territory adjustment, and the like cannot be discussed in a realistic manner outside a bi-communal setting. Chances are small that any progress can be made in the general public's understanding of these issues unless people have the chance to hear individuals from both sides, talking with each other, rather than at each other. The bi-communal seminars that addressed these issues have shown that productive dialogue can occur on these topics, and these need to be conducted in even greater quantity now that contacts are easier. Through these forums, it is possible that progress can occur in identifying a set of options for dealing with most concerns that drive the Cyprus problem.

■ Providing a moderating voice in response to provocative events. When the Buffer Zone events at Dherynia took place in August 1996, in which Greek-Cypriot motorcyclists entered the Buffer Zone threatening to ‘ride to Kyrenia,’ and resulting in the death of two Greek-Cypriot protestors, the outcry in both communities was intense. Turkish Cypriots were incensed that Greek Cypriots had tried to cross over into the area they control, and they used this incident to back up their argument that unless the Turkish troops had stopped them, the Greek Cypriots would have once again massacred Turkish Cypriots. The Greek Cypriots were shocked at the beating of a Greek-Cypriot protestor caught in the barbed wire and the killing of another who tried to take down the Turkish flag, and they used these events to reinforce their argument about the ‘barbaric’ nature of the Turks. The rhetoric on both sides was extreme and uncompromising. No one stopped to analyse what had led to these events, and neither side shouldered any of the responsibility they held for bringing them about. Perhaps the only setting where reasoned discussion occurred about these provocative events was among those who had been involved in the bi-communal activities. Within this community, there were attempts to understand why the events had spiralled out of control, how they might be perceived by the other community, how the one-sided rhetoric was hurting the cause of each side as well as the image of Cyprus to the outside world, and what might be done to prevent such events in the future. These discussions could not take place in a bi-communal setting at that time, but the individuals and groups with bi-communal experience met together, and they provided a moderating voice in response to an otherwise extreme and narrow discussion of blame and accusations. Their voice was not one that received major coverage in the press, but it helped in a small way to pull Cyprus back from a deadly course toward possible war. It is likely that other provocative episodes will occur in Cyprus, and the need for people with bi-communal experience who can think and speak more moderately in response to these events will be critical in order to prevent a negative spiral of violence from developing.

■ Presenting the general population with an alternative to fear of another war. Confrontations in Cyprus such as those at Dherynia in August 1996, and conflict between Greece and Turkey such as those over the island of Imia earlier that same year, could have easily escalated into full-scale military clashes that would have brought disaster to the people of Cyprus. The possibility of another war is a common topic of conversation for the people of Cyprus, and the anxiety associated with such scenarios permeates everyday life. People on both sides are concerned about how such a war will affect their children and the future of Cyprus. At times, this concern becomes pathological, disrupting many people's lives and standing in the way of progress. There may be no way to completely calm these fears, especially in the absence of an implemented political solution, but those involved in the bi-communal activities were able to obtain a certain amount of relief from the overbearing anxiety through the human connections they made with the 'enemy.' Although their fear of war was not necessarily lessened, a certain balance was achieved for many of the participants by seeing the very real possibility for peaceful co-existence. In addition, the larger population of Cyprus was presented with an alternative future to consider. The fact that large numbers of people were meeting and working together across community lines provided some hope that the coming years might bring something other than another war.

■ Providing signs of hope to the international community. The lack of progress in negotiations in Cyprus over the years left many members of the international community disheartened and discouraged. As dozens of special delegations, special envoys, fact-finding trips, 'final push' efforts, shuttle talks, proximity talks, secluded negotiations, and other attempts to bring the leaders of the two communities toward a settlement proved fruitless, most third-party negotiators and diplomatic personnel developed a sense of hopelessness about the possibility of reaching a viable agreement. The bi-communal activities provided for them a breath of fresh air amidst the unchanging rhetoric of the officials and the lack of movement with

the negotiations. The events that took place at Ledra Palace presented a different side of Cypriots, painting a picture of people who can engage in reasoned dialogue about both the past and the future and who can work together productively. A glimmer of hope emerged that provided a reason for the diplomatic community to continue their efforts. After all, diplomats are human beings as well, and there are few people who can remain optimistic in the face of continued deadlock. The participants in the bi-communal activities have demonstrated over and over that in a properly designed setting, the two communities can learn to trust one another and work together for a common future.

■ Breaking the cycle of mutual blame and accusations. In order to make progress, the cycle of mutual blame and accusations (see earlier discussion) must be broken. Perhaps the only place where this cycle has been broken is in the ongoing bi-communal groups. In this setting, individuals from both communities have met together consistently over a period of several years, engaged in productive dialogue on difficult issues, and produced analyses, projects, and plans that have the backing of the full group. These groups have experienced difficulties, at times falling into the trap of mistrust that characterises the larger society, but they've managed to work through their differences to tear down some of the walls that separated them across community lines. Their work demonstrates that, if the proper setting is created and if individuals adopt a constructive attitude, it is possible to replace the cycle of blame and accusation with one of mutual trust and understanding. Nothing could be more critical for the future of Cyprus.

#### PREPARING FOR LIFE AFTER A SETTLEMENT

Despite the way it often looks, to both Cypriots and outsiders, the day will come when the two sides will reach a settlement of the conflict. After so many years – literally generations – it will be not only a cause to celebrate but also a reason for peace-builders to work harder. In fact, the role of the bi-communal activities will be even more critical,



because contact will be easier, joint projects will be common, and cooperation will be required. In many ways, the inter-communal contacts have not focused so much on bringing about a settlement as they have been on preparing people for life after the settlement.

When and if a 'solution' to the Cyprus problem arrives, those with experience in cross-community contact will play a crucial role in the following:

■ 'Selling' a political agreement. Given the disparity in the positions of each party in the Cyprus conflict, it is obvious that many compromises will have to be made in order to reach a settlement. Some of these compromises will have to come in areas that the leadership has long promised are 'non-negotiable.' The biggest fear of many Cypriot and international strategists is that when the leaders manage to work out an agreement, they will have great difficulty 'selling' it to the people in their respective communities. The extreme nationalists on both sides will call the deal a 'sellout' to the other side and accuse their leaders of 'giving in' on fundamental issues. When this time comes, there will need to be voices that can help assure people of the need for compromise. The individuals in the bi-communal activities are among the few people in Cyprus who have experience in building consensus with the other side, and they may be the only ones to understand the need for compromise and accommodation. If the voice of the extremists is the only one heard in response to a negotiated agreement, then the chances are slim that it can receive the support of the people.

■ Forming partnerships. When an agreement between the two communities is eventually signed and accepted by the people of Cyprus, opportunities will exist finally for business and institutional partnerships to be formed. The success of these partnerships will be critical for the full implementation of the agreement. Some cooperation in the business sector will be driven by perceived potential for profit. However, most of the efforts to develop relationships across community lines will require determined initiative by individuals who understand their importance, who are aware of the potential

difficulties, and who are committed to their success. These initiatives will be difficult for ordinary citizens to carry out. Some might want to start a project with the other community but never carry through with their ideas, because of doubts about the possibility for results, fear of negative response from their colleagues, or uncertainty about how to proceed. Some who start such cooperative ventures will give up after encountering initial difficulties. A few will encounter conflicts they will not know how to manage, and these conflicts could escalate. The participants in the bi-communal activities, especially those who are part of the 'core' group with significant experience over the years, are ideally situated to promote true partnerships on the island. They have the necessary contacts with the other community; they know the topics that need to be addressed through such cooperative ventures; they already have in mind hundreds of potential projects; they are motivated to start such projects; they are sensitive to the concerns of the other community; they are aware of what might cause conflict; they possess skills for dealing with conflict and disagreement; they have the tools for problem-solving and design; they see the potential for impact on the larger society; and, perhaps most importantly, they are committed to making such ventures work.

■ Promoting the identity of peace-builder. The people of Cyprus, after decades of separation, are at a crossroads. The generation that planted the seeds of discord has never managed to take the steps that can lead toward positive redefinition of the relationship. As a result, progress is frozen, and the future is on hold. During the past few years, the citizen-level peace-building groups that have been formed hold promise for the future. The large number of people in both communities who have started reaching out to the other side in an effort to develop trust can lead to true partnerships. In their meetings, they have taken many of the steps outlined above, and for these individuals and groups, a new identity of 'peace-builder' is emerging. This identity, which is more positive, more realistic about the past, more forward-looking, and more aware of the

interdependence between communities, is helping to build trust and heal wounds. Still, the challenges are many, and time is running out. Hopefully, it will be possible soon to describe the identity of ‘peace-builder’ in more specific terms, and if sufficient numbers in each community can reconcile their differences and redefine their collective relationship, the people of Cyprus will be on their way to negotiating an agreement that will allow them to lead productive lives, both separately and in cooperation with one another in those areas where their interdependence binds them together.

#### SOME WORDS OF ADVICE FROM THE VETERANS

It is always helpful to learn from those who have gone before. Sometimes, advice from ‘veterans’ of bi-communal activities can help us avoid mistakes that were made in the past, and words of encouragement from those who have faced difficulties can help maintain our own desire to continue our involvement, even when times are rough. During the four-party seminar held in July 2001 in Bruges, Belgium, participants, representing some of the ‘pioneers’ of rapprochement work in Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus, were asked to give their advice to those currently involved in bi-communal and bi-national activities. The following list summarizes, in brief form, the recommendations offered by members of the Bruges group:

■ Understand that there are fundamental changes taking place in the region. Greece and Turkey can no longer afford to maintain an antagonistic relationship. The accession of Cyprus to the European Union, and the candidacy of Turkey for membership in the EU, have established a trajectory toward peace within the ‘conflictual triangle.’

■ It is important to recognize that rapprochement is irreversible. The leaders of Greece and Turkey are committed to better relations, and even if the governments change, there is little chance that the process will reverse.

■ Do everything you can to bring to the respective authorities what we have been doing in our work. Remember that those in elected offices work off the information that is available to them, and currently they have many misunderstandings about the value of bi-communal work in Cyprus. They need to be properly educated.

■ Intensify the coordination of civil initiatives with official initiatives and help officials learn from our experience. Although the 'real work' of peace must take place at the citizen level, it is the authorities who will set the terms for peace and who will sign agreements that we will all have to live by. Make contact with those in power and nurture the relationship between citizen groups and government officials.

■ Never forget that rapprochement is for civil society to sustain (not for persons of power). Don't personalize it by linking it with a single personality in office. These individuals, no matter how visionary they may be, cannot carry forward initiatives, and no matter who holds positions of power, the push for better relations must be centred on the citizens and citizen groups that are involved in cross-community activities.

■ Try to get away from fixed ideas and make an effort to see the other's point of view. We are all steeped in our biased histories, but until we listen to the other and find a way to really get behind their thinking, we can't make much progress.

■ Refrain from responding to points made that do not need or deserve an answer. In our culture, we tend to speak against everything we hear, and we feel a need to 'correct' everyone who says something we disagree with. This allows others to set the agenda. By ignoring the person who says stupid things, we can move the discussion toward more positive dialogue.

■ Find the wording that satisfies the need. Sometimes we limit ourselves by using terms that cause a negative reaction with others. If the term you want to use causes difficulties, then change it. Let your efforts be defined by what you do rather than what you call things.

- Report facts and not doctrines. Too often we present the propaganda we have heard as truths, when they are usually distortions of what actually happened, designed to support a certain point of view.
- Remember that by engaging in activities related to rapprochement you are performing the most patriotic moves that you can make. Nothing takes more courage and bravery, and nothing contributes more to the future of our country, than steps toward building sustainable peace.
- Remember that obtaining funding takes time and effort. No one is going to seek you out and ask what you want. There are many sources of funding for worthy efforts, and part of your time must be devoted to making contacts with these individuals and organizations.
- It is very useful to remember that life works in cycles: rapprochement will go through its ups and downs. There will be difficult times when it seems no progress is being made. There will be setbacks. However, we must keep working even during difficult times, and we must never lose our hope.

### CONCLUSION

Until humans started building bridges to cross rivers, canyons, and other obstacles provided by Mother Nature, travel was more restricted and groups tended to keep within the territory that defined their 'homeland.' There was not as much exchange of goods and services, in large part because it involved too much effort and took too much time to make such ventures worthwhile. Bridges literally changed the course of human history, because they opened up channels of communication, allowing the free flow, not only of material commodities and wares, but also of ideas and culture. They also promoted the formation of alliances, so that small communities could pool resources to enrich their lives and could band together to protect themselves against invading armies.

Bridges are given great emphasis in times of war, when much effort is devoted to destroying bridges used by the enemy, to stop the

advance of their armies. Consequently, after the war, bridges have to be rebuilt in order for life to continue productively. Sometimes these bridges are rebuilt hastily in order to start traffic moving as soon as possible, but when the resources are available, there is no doubt that it is better to replace the destroyed bridge with one that will stand strong over time and that will serve its purposes well.

The events of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s destroyed the bridges in Cyprus between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. These events also changed the social landscape. The Green Line became the deep canyon without a way across. It is time to build new bridges, and by becoming involved in constructive cross-community contact, you become the architects, engineers, and labourers engaged in this task. The design is not a simple one, and the challenges confronting the builders are numerous. It will require a lot of time and effort. But the result will establish new connections between two communities that are interdependent and that need to find ways to build empathy and work together productively.



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# RESOURCES ON THE WEB

## REGIONAL PEACE BUILDING

Cyprus Fulbright Commission

<http://www.fulbright.org.cy/>

European Commission

<http://www.ec-eu-delegation.com.cy/>

Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP)

<http://www.eliamep.gr>

Peace-Cyprus Web Site

<http://www.peace-cyprus.org/>

Technology for Peace (TFP)

<http://www.tech4peace.org/>

Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TSEV)

<http://www.tesev.org.tr>

The Bi-communal Development Programme:

<http://www.unopspmu.org/>

U.S. Embassy

<http://www.americanembassy.org.cy/bsp.htm>

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE BUILDING

Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives

<http://www.c-r.org/accord/index.shtml>

Beyond Intractability: Online Knowledge Base

<http://www.beyondintractability.org/iweb/index.htm>

Carter Center

<http://www.cartercenter.org>

Conflict Management Group (CMG)

<http://www.cmgroup.org/>

Conflict Research Consortium

<http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/>

Conflict Resolution Catalysts Home Page

<http://www.crcvt.org/>

George Mason University Degree Program in Conflict Resolution

<http://web.gmu.edu/departments/ICAR/>

Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy (IMTD)

<http://www.imtd.org/>

International Association for Conflict Management

<http://www.iacm-conflict.org/>

United States Institute of Peace

<http://www.usip.org>

Seeds of Peace

<http://www.seedsofpeace.org>

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Intercultural Relations

<http://www.interculturalrelations.com>

This is a free online interdisciplinary resource designed for people around the world who study, teach, train, or research in intercultural communication, cross-cultural psychology, cultural anthropology, multicultural education, race/ethnic relations (sociology), multicultural

literature, sociolinguistics, TESOL, international business and other related disciplines.

#### Intercultural Communication Institute

<http://www.intercultural.org>

ICI offers resources, including a Master's degree program, for cross-cultural, multicultural, international, and diversity training and education.

#### Intercultural Press Home Page

<http://interculturalpress.com/shop/index.html>

This is a source for books, videos, simulations and other publications that are used in intercultural communication training.

#### Intercultural Communication Loop

<http://www.webring.org/cgi-bin/webring?ring=intercultural;list>

This web ring is a linked list of sites related to the study of intercultural communication, aimed at educating about diverse cultures and promoting peace and tolerance of differences based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, beliefs, or abilities.

#### Teaching Tolerance

<http://www.tolerance.org>

Part of the Southern Poverty Law Center, this site includes '10 ways to fight hate,' 'explore your hidden biases,' 'deconstruct biased language,' and 'explore hidden history' (including 'quizzes' to measure your awareness and unconscious biases).



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Benjamin J. Broome is professor at Arizona State University. He teaches courses in intercultural communication, group facilitation, and conflict resolution. He regularly gives presentations at international conferences, and his publications have appeared in leading academic journals. In his research and application projects he has worked with groups in Mexico, Greece, Turkey, Cyprus, several countries in Europe, and with a number of Native American Tribes in the United States. From 1994-1996 he held a position as Senior Fulbright Scholar in Cyprus, offering seminars, workshops, and training in communication, inter-group relations, and conflict resolution. Since returning to his faculty position in the United States, he has travelled to the eastern Mediterranean numerous times to organize and facilitate workshops and seminars dealing with Cyprus and Greek-Turkish rapprochement.

Professor Broome has devoted his academic career to the development and application of culturally appropriate processes for building consensus in complex problem situations. His goal is

to assist groups in understanding and resolving difficult issues that confront them. He believes that in diversity there is strength, in conflict there is opportunity, and in constructive dialogue there is hope for building a viable future for all human beings.



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"Building Bridges Across the Green Line draws from many years of contact and cooperation between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots, who often came together under difficult conditions and overcame many obstacles to their work. The book summarizes the wisdom of the pioneers in bi-communal activities, and it will be a valuable guide for those who take the simple human step of communicating with their neighbors on 'the other side' of the buffer zone. It is gratifying to note that the author used as part of the title of his book the phrase: "Building Bridges" because back in 1978, when we started our co-operation, we were on record saying in a UNDP publication, that we are "building bridges" and that "it may take us half way along the path". We've come to know Benjamin Broome through a number of ground-breaking workshops he facilitated over the past decade, and this book reflects both his keen understanding of the two communities in Cyprus and his commitment to building links between people separated by conflict."

Lellos Demetriades and Mustafa Akinci  
Former Mayors of Nicosia