

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION INITIATIVE

Loyalism in Transition: 2

Learning from others in conflict

Report of an international workshop

compiled by

Michael Hall

ISLAND (80) **PAMPHLETS**

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**“The world we have made as a result of the level of
thinking we have done thus far creates problems we
cannot solve at the level of thinking which created them.”**

Albert Einstein

The above quote was utilised, extremely effectively, in a presentation made to the workshop by **Tommy Andrews** of the RESPECT project. Tommy is an ex-UDA prisoner who participated in the Loyalist blanket protest and who now works in deprived communities throughout the United Kingdom and across the world.

Other challenging presentations were made by **Tim Chapman** (also from RESPECT), **Jeff Maxwell** (NIACRO), **Roy Wallace** of the Breen Farm Media Project, and **Dr Jim McCauley** University of Huddersfield.

Cover photographs

Front: *top left:* Northern Ireland; *top right:* Palestine; *bottom:* Palestine
Back: *top left:* Moldova/Transdnistria; *top right:* Israel; *bottom:* Northern Ireland.

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Introduction

In 2005 Northern Ireland's largest Loyalist paramilitary organisation, the Ulster Defence Association, engaged in an extensive consultation process with its rank and file. Consensus feeling was that the organisation should play its part in transforming Loyalism and helping to create a more stable and peaceful society. The UDA leadership asked its political advisors, the Ulster Political Research Group (UPRG) to design a process which would facilitate such a development. From this the Conflict Transformation Initiative (CTI) emerged¹, and approaches were made to government, seeking support for the process they had identified.

The UDA/UPRG then requested assistance from a number of individuals who had an established track record in grassroots community work, much of it bridging the 'sectarian divide'. Jackie Hewitt and Barney McCaughey, Manager and President respectively of the Farset project, were asked if Farset would administer whatever funding was provided for the CTI, and this was agreed. I was approached because my Community Think Tanks Project, with its associated pamphlet series, was seen as an ideal way of engaging UDA members – and, indeed, the wider society – in a challenging and open debate around the pertinent issues involved in such a process of transition. Joe Camplisson, a specialist in community development and conflict resolution, who had worked with the UDA leadership from the 1970s, was asked to provide training to the key workers who would be employed within the initiative.

As part of his approach, Camplisson incorporates interaction with community activists from other arenas of conflict. In 1991 he helped establish a community development and conflict resolution process in Moldova² (which is in conflict with its breakaway region of Transdniestria). This work attracted the interest of a group of Israelis and Palestinians³ who are seeking to implement a conflict resolution process in their own region. Following a request from the UPRG it was agreed to bring together activists from these two conflicts and UDA members for what was hoped would be a productive exchange of views and experiences.

What followed was an 8-day 'International Foundation Workshop' (involving over 60 participants) which took place in Belfast between 8–15 October 2006, and this document is an edited account of the proceedings. Unfortunately, Camplisson underwent a triple bypass heart operation two weeks before the conference and could only play the role of occasional observer during the event.

Michael Hall, *Farset Community Think Tanks Project*

Participants

ULSTER DEFENCE ASSOCIATION INNER COUNCIL

ULSTER POLITICAL RESEARCH GROUP

John Bunting, Sammy Duddy, Frankie Gallagher, Colin Halliday, Billy McQuiston and David Nicholl

UDA LOCAL LEVEL LEADERSHIP AND RANK AND FILE

MOLDOVA/TRANSDNIESTRIA

Members of the Joint Committee for Democratisation and Conciliation (JCDC):

Yuri Ataman (Moldova) agronomist, former mayor's aide

Evghenii Berdnikov (Transnistria) cement works director, former Communist Party First Secretary of town Rybnitsa

Valentin Romanchiuk (Transnistria) lawyer; mayor's aide, Bender (a city in Transnistria under two jurisdictions)

Svetlana Baldencova (Moldova) scientist

ISRAEL

Members of the Young Israeli Forum for Cooperation (YIFC):

Ofer Zalberg Co-Chairman of the Board

Nimrod Goren Executive Director

Dror Kraus Project Manager

PALESTINE

Three members of Palestinian Vision

FACILITATORS

Diana Francis Chair, Committee for Conflict Transformation and Support, London

Paul Clifford Committee for Conflict Transformation and Support

Ian Bell MICOM and ex-Charities Aid Foundation

Lord Hylton Member of the House of Lords, President of NIACRO

Barney McCaughey President of Farset

Note: To identify to the reader which category of participant is being quoted in the narrative, but at the same time to allow for some anonymity, the following abbreviations precede the quotes:

[Council]	a member of the UDA's ruling Inner Council
[UPRG]	a member of the Ulster Political Research Group
[UDA]	one of the other UDA members present
[Mol/Trans]	a member of the JCDC from Moldova and Transnistria
[Isr]	a member of YIFC, Israel
[Pal]	a member of Palestinian Vision
[Facil]	a member of the facilitation team

International foundation workshop

Lord Hylton opened the workshop. Centred as it was around the UDA's Conflict Transformation Initiative, he said that it was evident that certain members of the UPRG and the UDA had had the courage and the vision to initiate this search for a new and peaceful way forward for the Loyalist community, something which was to be greatly welcomed. He urged rank and file members of the UDA to do all that they could to make this new vision a reality. Lord Hylton expressed the hope that, once any public scepticism was overcome, there would be a positive response from those coming from the Nationalist and Republican traditions. He felt certain that the majority of people in Northern Ireland did not wish their children to live forever in a divided society. He praised the efforts of Joe Camplisson, who had endeavoured to engage constructively with the Loyalist community since the early 1970s. He commended the Farset Project, not only for its many years of patient work but for providing such an excellent venue for the workshop. He then welcomed the international participants: from Moldova and Transdniestria, and from Palestine and Israel. Lord Hylton noted the many years of productive engagement between Northern Ireland and Moldova, and welcomed the fact that this linkage had now broadened to encompass those attempting to address the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Finally, he welcomed the facilitators. In summary, he expressed a hope that not only would the week's work prove successful in assisting the UDA to progress from where it was now to where it clearly wished to be, but that the exchange of experiences with the international visitors would help the organisation along that path, as well as prove of value to the visitors themselves.

Nominated spokespersons then gave a brief introduction to the ten groups present: the UDA Inner Council, the UPRG, the five main UDA brigade areas, the Moldovans/Transdniestrians, the Israelis/Palestinians and the facilitators:

[Council] The Ulster⁴ Defence Association was formed by people who, when the 'Troubles'⁵ broke out, were determined to oppose what was happening to their communities and their country. We started off as vigilante groups, trying to protect our communities from attack. Then these groups came together under one structure. It was purely a defence organisation in the early days, but as IRA atrocities got worse we believed that the best way to defend was to attack, to respond to what was happening to our areas by giving the same back to the people who were giving it to us. Out of this ongoing conflict the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF) were born. Many of the people here today have served life in prison, and I am proud to be here representing them. Where do we hope to go? We hope to make Northern Ireland a better place. As Lord Hylton said, we

don't want our children and our grandchildren going through all the things that we have suffered. We want this society to change and become a better place, but we need to play a part in making that happen. And we certainly don't want Sinn Féin/IRA telling us what our future is going to be. We fought the IRA when they tried to destroy this country, tried to take away our identity, and we will still fight them. But it will be in a different way, not on the battlefield but through the force of our arguments. I would like to welcome you all here; hopefully by the end of the week we'll know a lot more about how to make things better.

[UPRG] The UPRG is composed of ex-prisoners and those who have had first-hand experience of the conflict, including myself: the first UDR soldier to be murdered by the Provisional IRA was a cousin of mine, and two weeks later another cousin, a nine-month-old baby, was blown out of its pram across Abercorn Square in Strabane after the IRA left a suitcase bomb at a bus-stop. My own home was bombed in 1987, two weeks prior to the murder of John McMichael. Indeed, every time our organisation has tried to go down a political path, our leadership has been assassinated by either Crown forces colluding with the Provisionals, the IRA themselves, or sometimes by criminals within our own organisation. We all support the Union, because we are part of the British family of nations, but I personally believe that the people of Ulster have the right to self-determine their own future, separate from England, separate from the Republic, but having good working relations with both. The Good Friday Agreement⁶ does not recognise our identity as a people. It allows for only two options: the unification of Ireland by consent, or a continuation of the Union; it does not give us the right to determine our own future. During the Troubles over 2000 Protestants or Unionists were murdered by Republicans, and 40,000 people belonging to our community have been maimed or left traumatised.

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The spokespersons representing the five UDA Brigade areas revealed in their presentations that, despite their geographical spread, they shared many similarities. Many had direct personal experience of the conflict – with family members or friends being killed by the IRA or other Republicans – and most of them had spent time in jail as a result of their involvement. Some of them lived close to conflict interfaces and recalled the sense of always being under siege. Most, while accepting the reality of the IRA ceasefire, felt that dissident Republican groups still posed a danger to future stability. However, no-one wanted a return to war; their desire was for a just, peaceful and inclusive society. They all hoped, therefore, that the week's work would help to develop the UDA's strategy for moving forward. There was also a frustration at the negative way

their organisation was constantly portrayed by the media. They had all joined the UDA largely because they felt that the government was failing to protect their communities and their right to remain citizens of the United Kingdom. They were eager to hear the experiences of those from other conflicts. Some were scathing of the mainstream Unionist leadership, as one person commented:

[UDA] I got fed up with Unionist politicians making blood-curdling speeches telling people that ‘Ulster is right and Ulster will fight’, but yet when young men had the courage and conviction to engage in that fight, they were condemned, and when they went into prison no Unionist politician wanted to have anything to do with them.

[Mol/Trans] I am chairman of the JCDC, an NGO [non-governmental organisation] from the Republic of Moldova, which was part of the former Soviet Union. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, internal conflict within Moldova led, in 1991, to the creation of a breakaway region: Transdniestria (the territory lying east of the River Dniester), which today has all the structures of a real state but is unrecognised by the international community. Moldova was a multi-ethnic country, composed not only of Moldovans, but Russians, Ukrainians and others. Initially, the conflict was based around ethnic lines, which was very strange for us because up until then all cultures had lived together without problems, and intermarriage was very common and acceptable. Our organisation – which is composed of people from both Moldova and Transdniestria – was established in 1992 with the help of people from your country.⁴ Over the years we have

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managed to bring together people from both sides of our conflict, and we have also managed to work at different levels: from village level right up to government level. We are trying to bring these levels together, to create movement towards conflict resolution. My colleagues have very different backgrounds. Evghenii in Soviet times was a mayor of a town in Transdniestria, a regional First Secretary in the Communist Party and a former tank commander. Valentin is a lawyer and was a combatant during the conflict, fighting on the Transdniestrian side. Svetlana is a physicist but because of the conflict and difficult transition period the economy has collapsed, so she has had to find another job. We are here to share our experiences with you and the Israelis and Palestinians, and also to learn, and we hope this will be a fruitful event.

[Isr] We are mostly from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. We have all served in the Israeli Defence Forces for three years as reservists. We all studied at university later and today we are all leading volunteers in the YIFC, Young Israeli Forum

for Cooperation, which is an Israeli NGO working to empower young people, to overcome what we feel is inadequate political leadership in our society. We work on various activities with our Palestinian partners, aimed at bringing an end to the conflict. We also work to improve Israeli-European relations, which is very important to us. Through our military service and the experiences which came with it, we have had friends and acquaintances killed or injured, and, like many Israeli citizens, we have all experienced the fear of terrorism.

[Pal] We all come from Palestine. During our conflict thousands of people have been killed and many thousands have been put in jail. We suffer daily the presence of the Israeli forces. We are constantly oppressed. We want to help create a new Palestinian leadership. Why are we sitting down here with Israelis? If you deal with your enemy directly, speak with him, even laugh with him, sometimes you get sight of the things you have in common. At the end of this week we hope that we can learn from you and about your conflict, just as we hope that you learn more about our conflict, our suffering and our hope. We all want to live in peace some day. I thank the organisers, and I have learned that it helps when you ask for help.

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[Facil] All of us have been involved with conflict resolution work in different theatres: Africa, Asia, the Caucasus, the Balkans and Northern Ireland. We come from different organisations. What we would like to get out of this week is a better understanding of a less well-known position within this society. We want to help you find practical ways of fleshing out your vision for the future.

A panel was then assembled, representing the UDA Inner Council and UPRG.

[UPRG] Welcome to our friends from abroad and to our own comrades from the different areas. The Ulster Defence Association has been in existence 35 years, and has encountered many problems over those years. One was the government's policy of criminalisation, which I believe was part of a counter-insurgency technique to undermine us. But it was made easier by people within our ranks who were more akin to criminals than people whose main concern was for their community and their country. When the Good Friday Agreement was signed there were times when our organisation didn't know whether we were in the peace process or out of it. It was followed by a number of internal feuds which inflicted terrible pain and suffering on our community, and some people lost their lives. But we have learnt from these internal conflicts, and this was revealed recently when certain so-called 'leaders' who were heavily involved in drugs and crime were removed peacefully – by people using their brains instead of guns. The current transition of the UDA has been open and transparent,

allowing the public to see that our organisation is dealing with criminality.

In 2005, an extensive process of consultation with the UDA's rank and file membership took place, right across Northern Ireland. Members were consulted about what they thought the organisation should do, how we could move into the future, and what should be done about criminality. The booklet, *A new reality?*, summarises those consultations.¹ Following this, the UDA's ruling Inner Council instructed the UPRG to speak to government, to tell them that our members wanted to move on but that we needed assistance to do so. Government at first was very sceptical but they finally engaged in a dialogue as to how we might accomplish our transformation process. We said that we needed a vehicle which would move our community out of conflict, the same process which had been made available to the Irish Republican community. To cut a long story short, we asked the British government to support a Conflict Transformation Initiative (CTI) which would last a minimum of five years. The negotiations were hard and protracted, but ultimately everybody agreed that the UDA needed this support – all except one senior civil servant who said 'No, you can't have this.' More negotiations followed and we ended up with a proposal for a six-month 'initial development stage', which would allow us to find answers to the questions the civil servants were posing. We reached agreement on this too, but the same civil servant said: 'No, I'm not signing that either.' For almost one whole year they had negotiated with us, tried to tire us out, tried to get us to go away, and when that failed they still said 'No'. So the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Hain, who I think has been very brave, eventually signed it off as a political instruction, and it was agreed to release a small amount of money to allow five project workers to carry out the initial six months' work. The important thing for us is not the small amount of funding we got, but the recognition by the British government that we were entitled to a process, the same as the Provisional IRA.

So, we are at the beginning of that initial development stage which will help our communities see (i) how we can reach a situation where there are no paramilitary organisations

any more; (ii) how we can develop strategies based on job creation, socio-economic regeneration, to make that environment possible; and (iii) how we can skill up our people, our members, to learn how to work the strategies, and create this new environment. This workshop is aimed at helping us develop and consolidate these strategies.

[UDA] What do you see as the biggest obstacles in the way of this process?

[UPRG] In my view, the mainstream Unionist parties. If the DUP lead a devolved government they will attempt to disempower us, by controlling whatever

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funding will be coming into our communities. Unionist politicians are more interested in gaining political benefit than in empowering communities.

[UDA] Would you not say that the marching season⁷ is going to be another obstacle? We can have people constantly working on the ground at the peacelines, working towards creating a shared space, but they are continually shafted by government and the Parades Commission.⁸ I think we urgently need to formulate some sort of policy which helps us get by these major problems every year.

[Council] I think what the British government hope is that when Sinn Féin are finally sharing power in an Assembly they will turn around and say: 'Where do you want to march, son? Springfield Road? Away you go. 'Cause we beat you.'

[UDA] There are people sitting here who have been involved on a local basis regarding parades, and involving cross-community dialogue. This year, despite some very contentious parades, we had a quiet summer and that was recognised right across Northern Ireland. We were the catalysts who got the parades issue sorted out on a general basis, and yet our contribution is ignored.

[Council] There's nobody working harder than the people in this room, trying to resolve different issues. But nobody's recognising it. Senior Unionist politicians don't recognise either us or the work we do, yet three weeks before an election they'll be coming rapping doors and seeking our votes, or seeking our help to facilitate some parade. And then we're the good guys again – for a short time. When they don't need us any more they put us back into a hole in the ground.

[UPRG] We deserve recognition not only for the work we do at a local level, but as citizens of Northern Ireland. The British government views us all as 'Paddies'; we're a problem to them, and the quicker they get rid of that problem, the happier they'll be. Irish Nationalists and Republicans don't recognise us as a people with a right to express our culture. People are constantly

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trying to assimilate us into an Irish Nationalist vision of the future, where we're all Irish and everything is rosy. The core of the problem is that we are not recognised as possessing our own identity, and having a right to express it.

[Council] Unfortunately, we have shot ourselves in the foot that many times. Certain individuals who used to belong to the organisation destroyed our reputation, and left our organisation and Loyalism in general in the gutter. And what we have to do is get it out of there and get it back to where it should be. And we have to take that back from all the villains who have gone and the ones that're

still here. There has to be an honesty, and it has to start on our own side and then the people on the other side can start to believe in that honesty.

[Pal] I have two questions. Firstly, what practical things do you want from Republicans to move towards peace? Secondly, you said that one of your problems was that your case is largely unknown, whereas the Irish side is known all over the world. This is what I myself have found, and I want to know *why* that is so?

[UPRG] We want Republicans to recognise our identity, which is reflected in the Loyal Order parades, the Union flag, the Ulster flag... everything that gives expression to our identity as a people. The more they call for the removal of those things which signify my identity the more threatened I feel. And the more threatened I feel, the more I want to react to that threat, by conflict.

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[Council] Every ten years since Partition⁹ there has been an upsurge of violence from the Republican movement. In the late 1960s they hijacked the Civil Rights protests in order to pursue their goal of a United Ireland. They have murdered us, maimed us, tried to take away all that belonged to us. We want to be British, and for us to live in peace with them they would have to give up this demand for a United Ireland. If anything, we should all be working for a United Ulster.

[UPRG] I also think the Republican movement needs to be honest with itself, and with everyone else. For instance, their paper, *An Phoblacht*, is published in *three* versions. There is a publication which is for local Irish consumption, there is another version published in Europe which is left-wing, and a third in America which is aimed at right-wing Irish-Americans.

[UPRG] I'll give you an idea of their approach. A former member of the IRA who is now a community worker was in this very building last night, and he thought he was speaking to the Palestinians only, so he was laying it on thick against Israel, saying what bad people the Israelis were. It was only afterwards that somebody said to him: 'What were you doing, there were Israelis in that room too?' And he kicked up a row: 'You should have told me that; I would have said it differently!' These people are willing to tell lies when it suits them.

[UPRG] As to why our voice wasn't heard, I think there are different answers to that. Republicans learned how to internationalise their version very early into the conflict, and they also emphasised with whoever they talked to, whether left-wing socialists or right-wing conservatives. As for us, we left it up to our government to tell our side of the story, but they completely failed to do that.

[UPRG] The IRA's biggest propaganda tool was their terrorism, which gave

them international headlines, and they managed to convince liberation movements around the world that they too were fighting for 'liberation'. But the international community never knew that *we* were fighting for *our* very survival as a people *against them*. And when the US opened the White House to Gerry Adams it internationalised the conflict even further. It also taught al-Qa'eda that Britain and the United States could be bombed but yet would eventually appease terrorism. And they got '9/11' as a result.

[Mol/Trans] Do you have any joint work going on between the two sides, or do you see any prospects of that?

[Council] Where we are [meeting] now is on an interface, which sees some contentious parades. And there is dialogue at a local community level with senior Republicans to get that parade passed over without incident. We also have councillors who work with Sinn Féin in Belfast City Hall, as do all the Unionist parties; we work on a day-to-day basis on different issues. So, yes, there are people in North and West Belfast who have day and daily contact with Republicans or who have met Republicans in the past. There is also a lot of community development work going on jointly involving the two communities.

[UDA] The Parades Commission themselves blew some of that work out of the water with their decisions on the Whiterock parade. We are seeking a stable road here that is shared by both Nationalist and Loyalist people, and those decisions turned that whole effort upside down and put people at each other's throats. It knocked us back years in terms of the dialogue we were having.

[Pal] I am trying to make a connection between your situation and our situation in Palestine. You said that you wanted Irish Republicans to recognise your identity, which is the same thing we demand from Israel: that there is a nation of people living alongside them whose rights they should recognise. Instead, they enter your house in the night, or they destroy it just because one wanted man happened to pass outside your door.

They are putting checkpoints at the entrance to our cities, they are preventing us from moving from one area to another, they are preventing us from exercising the simplest human rights in Palestine.

[UPRG] The situation in Northern Ireland is much more subtle. Because the violence has stopped it is hard to convince people that there still remains

a major problem. We are being assimilated into a culture that is alien to us, but it is all being done very slowly. But unless people are being killed nobody wants to listen to you; they think the problem has disappeared.

You said that you wanted Irish Republicans to recognise your identity, which is the same thing we demand from Israel: that there is a nation of people living alongside them whose rights they should recognise.

[Isr] Is there a consensus regarding the political solution you are looking for?

[UPRG] In the past, the UDA produced two major political documents. One was in 1978 called *Beyond the Religious Divide*, in which we advocated a devolved government based on power-sharing and proportionality. Much of that was achieved in the Good Friday Agreement. We also called for a Bill of Rights which would protect the human rights of each individual and show respect for each other's cultures. We called for a written constitution; the UK hasn't got a written constitution. We also advocated the setting up of North-South structures to develop economic benefit for all the people on this island, and we called for a British-Irish relationship which would benefit the people of the two islands. All of that was there in our 1978 document. It has taken the Republican community 28 additional years to reach the point we were at back then. In 1987 we produced *Common Sense*, which advocated the same things.

The Good Friday Agreement offers only two choices: vote for a United Ireland, or stay within the Union. It neither offers, nor explores, other choices – such as independence – and we are saying that we have to go beyond consent, and address the roots of the conflict.

[UPRG] Although we see the Good Friday Agreement as providing the basis of stable, shared government, we do have major problems with it. It views the problem here in terms of a mathematical equation based on 'consent': if a majority of the electorate vote for a United Ireland then it can come into being. Now, to outsiders, that might seem very fair, logical and democratic. But it fundamentally fails to address the *roots* of our conflict, which are based on *identity*. The Good Friday Agreement offers only two choices: vote for a United Ireland, or stay within the Union. It neither offers, nor explores, *other* choices – such as independence – and we believe that, if we are ever to reach a lasting solution, we will have to go *beyond* consent and address the roots of the conflict. That conflict will not disappear just because of a mathematical headcount. So, what we're saying is that instead of waiting 15-20 years for another conflict to erupt – initiated by Ulster Protestants not prepared to accept that, even by the ballot box, their identity and culture should be swallowed up within a United Ireland – we need to engage with the British Government, the Irish government and Europe, and get them to recognise that a much broader solution is required. Don't wait until the inevitable conflict happens, let's talk about it now.

[UPRG] The IRA has also achieved a victory over the British military: they have demilitarised all the bases, they have got the Army out, they have got rid of the UDR and they have destroyed the RUC. They are now in the process of destroying the intelligence service. And when they eventually take control over the security apparatus of the state they can use it against people like us who might want to resist change; they will use it to suppress our people further.

[Isr] I am very impressed by the consultation process you have undertaken. What do you think will be your hardest tasks in its future phases?

[UPRG] We don't know the answer to that yet; we are just at the beginning. Alongside the community development work which will be undertaken as part of the CTI, we plan an extensive process of debate within our own organisation, but embracing the wider community. We will be running a number of 'Think Tank' discussions, and each will be described in a pamphlet, 5000 copies of which will be distributed throughout our organisation. You have seen our first pamphlet, *A new reality?* which explains how we got to the present stage. It will be followed by a report on this workshop. Then will come the first actual Think Tank, on the theme *Is the War really over?* because we want to give our members the opportunity to express their views on this. The next is *The state of the Protestant community*, which will be an exploration of the many problems facing our communities: interface tensions, drugs, criminality, socio-economic disadvantage, youth alienation. The next is *A heritage under threat?* which will be an exploration of the perceived threats to our identity. Then we intend to ask the mainstream Unionist parties to engage in a debate on the future of this society. From all these discussions we hope to pull together *A New Vision*. Finally – but only if our membership is in agreement – for the last Think Tank we will be seeking *A Republican/Nationalist response* to what we are doing. This will all take time. So, come back in 18 months and see how we got on.

Alongside the community development work which will be undertaken as part of the CTI, we plan an extensive process of debate within our own organisation, but embracing the wider community.

A panel was then formed by the Moldovan and Transdniestrian participants.

[Mol/Trans] I would like to first of all congratulate people in Northern Ireland for their successful movement towards peace. I was first here in 1993 at which time there were still checkpoints and other visible signs of conflict. But you have moved a long way since then and very soon I hope you will have the chance for even more stability and prosperity. As I said earlier, our own conflict started with the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Soviet times there had been restrictions placed on cultural expression, but now a Moldovan nationalist movement began to assert itself. This in turn created tensions among other cultures who had been living within Moldova for generations, many of them in that part of Moldova lying east of the River Dniester (Transdniestria): Ukrainians and Russians among them. These tensions were manipulated by political forces and as a result Moldova entered into a period of violent conflict. Although this was a short conflict, tanks and mines were used, so it was a real civil war. Not only were Russians, Moldovans and Ukrainians fighting one another, but, as our population is very mixed – practically every family has relatives on the

‘other side’ – relatives were often fighting relatives. Eventually a ceasefire was agreed and a security zone – with the River Dniester as the dividing line – was created between the two sides, manned by Moldovan, Transdnestrian and Russian forces (who still maintained a presence in Transdnestria). After the ceasefire an international mediation process was initiated. This failed and 15 years after the conflict first broke out there has been no resolution to the status of Transdnestria. Our organisation tries to create an environment where a solution can be found. People like us do not have the authority to resolve the conflict but we can hopefully create a more positive environment in which politicians can start to resolve it. However, even the military people who control the security zone complain that they put in a lot of work to maintain peace but the politicians fail to use this opportunity to reach agreement. Some people might say that there is no conflict in Moldova because there is no fighting going on, but there is continued division and the border between Moldova and Transdnestria is marked with checkpoints. Transdnestria has practically all the formal structures of a state: its own parliament, its own military forces, and courts. As long as this problem remains unresolved the worse the economic conditions become, in both parts. In Soviet times Moldova and Transdnestria had one economy, with different industries on either side, and now one side cannot function properly without the other. In our organisation we explore issues which could bring together people from all levels within Moldova and Transdnestria. This gives us a chance to get ordinary people into discussion with each other, and with their own government officials.

[Mol/Trans] I am a Russian, born in Volgograd, formerly called Stalingrad. After I finished the army I graduated as an engineer and was working in Moldova. For me, Moldova then was like any other part of my motherland, it was a part of the Soviet Union. This was in 1975. At that time I remember reading in the newspapers about the problems

I remember reading about the problems in Northern Ireland but thought that this type of conflict could never happen to us. Suddenly we too found ourselves involved in a violent conflict, and in a short period more than 1000 had been killed.

in Northern Ireland, and other places in the world, but we thought that this type of conflict could never happen to us. Suddenly we too found ourselves involved in a violent conflict, and in a short period more than 1000 people had been killed. Initially, it started by certain groups of people raising tensions on nationalist issues. For example, Moldovan nationalists, whose language is based on the *Latin* alphabet, wanted to make it the compulsory state language, but this threatened those from a Russian and Ukrainian background whose language is based on the *Cyrillic* (Russian) alphabet. These tensions erupted while I was the mayor of a town (in Transdnestria) of 100,000 people, and there were massive protest demonstrations. I appealed for people not to be violent, but to no avail.

As well as the conflict between Moldova and Transdniestria, there are problems inside Transdniestria itself. For example, some 40% of those who live there are ethnic Moldovans, who obviously want to teach their children in the Latin alphabet, but the authorities in Transdniestria won't allow this, and this has created problems. So both sides have tried to establish an exclusiveness around cultural issues. I believe this is wrong. I believe that we should respect the rights of *all* those people who are living within a state; all groups should be allowed to live in peace together and to develop as they want. At the moment both sides want complete victory over the other.

I believe that we should respect the rights of all those people who are living within a state; all groups should be allowed to live in peace together and to develop as they want.

[Mol/Trans] I live in a town called Bender, which suffered the most from the conflict; it is situated on the River Dniester, which now divides Moldova from Transdniestria. I would like to mention one particular story. There was a period when both sides were keeping to their own positions but continued to shoot over at each other, killing a few people every day. As this seemed pointless, I got in touch by radio with the commander on the other side and we arranged to meet on the bridge over the river. We agreed that we would maintain our positions but that no one would continue to shoot. However, as in any conflict, there were people wishing to fight, hot-heads who were not under control, so we agreed that if shooting began then *both* sides would open fire at the place from where the shooting originated! That put an end to the fighting, and after that neither side lost any people. Why do I tell you this story? Just to show that even in the most difficult situation it is always possible to find ways to talk with the other side and find solutions. My personal observations is that for some people this kind of war acts like a drug, and they cannot adapt to a peaceful life and want to fight again. Indeed, some went to fight in other places: Chechnya, Nagorno-Karabakh and Yugoslavia. According to what I know, most of them have been killed. My feeling is that the sooner we stop fighting, give up our arms and dissolve our military formations, the less chance there is for people to get addicted to this drug. It takes more courage to stop the fighting than to continue the war.

[Mol/Trans] My mother is Moldovan and my father is Ukrainian. His family always lived in Transdniestria, but I was born on the Moldovan side. We were very worried when the conflict started because it separated us from our relatives and we didn't know what was happening to them. And, quite apart from the internal conflict, there were also problems associated with the break-up of the Soviet Union: from being part of a large country with all its certainties we now found ourselves in a newly independent country with different structures. However, I believe people should not be afraid of such changes; they just have to find a new way to live under new arrangements. Certainly, as long as our identity is

preserved and protected, we shouldn't be afraid of structural change. Yesterday I saw part of the peaceline which divides your communities. It is a sad thing to see. But for the sake of our children we always have to look for things that we share in common, things which unite both sides. Our friends from Northern Ireland speak about of a lack of trust. In our organisation we are lucky to have that trust, and I hope that you too will manage to establish this trust, in order to implement your ideas – and always non-violently.

[UDA] I take it if the international community recognised Transdnierstria it would help to stabilise your country?

[Mol/Trans] Valentin thinks it would, but Evghenii thinks it would set a very bad precedent for the world because it would in effect be condoning the creation of a state based not on nationality but on political ambition.

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[Facil] That was a very unified presentation. But, more importantly, the last comment reveals that people can work extremely well across the conflict divide and yet still retain a diversity of opinion.

The Palestinians and Israelis then made up a panel.

[Pal] Although we are sitting up here together, we will not be giving a joint presentation, as we represent totally different points of view. Hopefully such a thing might happen in the future. Before 1948 Palestine was under a British mandate and during that time Lord Balfour promised to give Jews 'land without people to people without land', which was a lie, because Palestine at that time was full of people. During the mandate, the British facilitated the immigration of Jewish people to Palestine and also provided them with weapons. On the other hand they prevented any kind of Palestinian resistance movement from acquiring weapons or struggling against either the British occupation or the increasing Jewish immigration. Then the Jewish people started to build settlements, and began to confiscate more and more land with the blessing of the British. The newcomers destroyed 450 Palestinian villages in order to force people to leave their homeland. In 1948 they established the Israeli state and hundreds of thousands of refugee people went to live in Syria and Jordan. At present there are more than five million Palestinian people living as refugees outside Palestine. The new Israel state seized more than 40% of the land, the rest was under Egyptian and Jordanian control. In 1967 Jordan and Egypt and other countries tried to retake the land that was under Israeli authority but, unfortunately, as a result of this war we lost *all* the land, and Palestine became under total Israeli occupation. Senior refugee people formed the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and they started their struggle on behalf of the Palestinian people.

1987 saw the first uprising; it was not an armed uprising, but mostly young people throwing stones at Israeli jeeps. The Israelis responding by shooting indiscriminately at women and children. In that same year Hamas was established. Hamas is one of the religious resistance movements and is on the rightist side of politics in Palestine. In 1993 the first peace agreement was signed in Oslo, with the blessing of the Americans. This agreement allowed for the formation of a Palestinian Authority with control over Palestinian areas, starting with Gaza and Jericho. After five years the Palestinian people were to have their own independent state, but, of course, this did not happen. Nevertheless, after Oslo, Palestinians for the first time had control of their own ministries, the health sector, etc. Of course Israel was still controlling everything from a distance, and in our economy and every aspect of our life we are very dependant on Israel.

Then, in 2000, Ariel Sharon, leader of the Likud Party, entered the Al-Aqsa mosque – one of the most holy places for Muslims – in what was considered an attempt to provoke the Palestinian people. This, as well as frustration with the Oslo Agreement, led to a second uprising in 2000, which this time included armed resistance. As a result, Israel reoccupied the whole area which she had given to the Palestinian Authority and so once again the whole of Palestine was under Israeli occupation. The Palestinian Authority still exists but in reality Israel controls everything. During the past six years alone we have had 3850 people killed, 40,000 injured, and 10,300 put into Israeli jails. Israeli has also started to build a wall, which separates Palestinian from Palestinian. There are some gates for access, but it takes 3-4 hours to get through.

At the beginning of this year a majority of Palestinians, because they felt that Oslo did not achieve anything and that the Fatah political party, who had signed that agreement, were corrupt, voted for Hamas. But because the world considers Hamas a terrorist movement, vital aid to the Palestinian Authority has been cut off. The world is demanding that this new government recognise Israel, and yet the world doesn't recognise our democratically-elected government. Right now there are more than 40 members of the Palestinian parliament in Israeli jails. I want to make one final comment. It's not easy for me to be in the same room as Israelis, believe me. And it's not easy for me to talk to them and say things to them. I have lost many friends and many relations over the past six years. I will not forget, I will not forgive, but maybe one day we can achieve a comprehensive peace.

[Isr] I could spend my ten minutes responding to what you have just heard. Instead, I will give you a

personal view on developments in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the way these have been perceived by the Israeli public. I will begin in 1987, with the

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first Palestinian uprising, the first Intifada, which in my eyes was a huge success: by primitive means the Palestinians made the whole world and the Israelis understand that there was a problem which must be solved. This led to the 1993 Oslo Agreement, the immediate results of which were tremendous and most Israelis felt that the reconciliation process was reaching the point of no return. You had the Israeli Army withdrawn from the cities; you had the Palestinian police created and co-operating with Israel. You had an amazing increase in tourism to both Israel and the Palestinian Territories, and the start of major financial investment. The fact that atrocities still continued didn't change the general belief in Israel that things were going in the right direction. Then you had suicide bombings in buses and public places. Friends of mine lost relatives or were wounded, and there was a fear of travelling anywhere by bus. But somehow we went on believing that everything was going to be okay.

I believe this is the golden hour of people-to-people initiatives; maybe we can establish a form of second-track diplomacy, to try and overcome the failure of the political leadership on both sides.

I think this optimism ended in 2000, not because of Sharon's visit to the Al-Aqsa mosque, but because of the failure of the second Camp David summit. Israel had negotiated with the only accepted leader of the Palestinian population, Arafat, and he didn't deliver. I believe this was a tragic turning point in the history of our conflict because disillusionment then set in and pretty much everything collapsed. As a result, the second Intifada began, and, most recently, the Palestinian elections were won by Hamas, an organisation which does not recognise Israel's right to exist.

What opportunities were lost? Israel failed to negotiate with Arafat's successor, Mahmoud Abbas, who in Israeli eyes has one big advantage over other Palestinian leaders – his strong stand against violence. On the other side, Palestinians failed to respond to a unique Israeli initiative – the unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Not a single Israeli soldier or settler remained and there was a return to the 1967 border. And yet the only response we got from the Palestinian side was Qassam rockets fired at towns in southern Israel. Where do we stand right now? For the last six years there has been total stagnation. At a government level nothing has changed and in this kind of conflict stagnation effectively means going backwards. This is what drove me and others to join the initiative we represent today, because I believe this is the golden hour of people-to-people initiatives; maybe we can establish a form of second-track diplomacy, to try and overcome the failure of the political leadership on both sides.

[Isr] I would like to pick up from there, and talk about how civil society can react vis-a-vis this conflict, and how we as an organisation are trying to empower a new young leadership and are reaching out to our Palestinian partners and international bodies in our efforts to resolve our conflict. We can see two kinds

of contexts in which ‘peace’ efforts can take place. There was the Oslo Agreement and the years of progress at governmental level. The people on the ground also wanted to reach out and do things together, and we felt that in doing so we were implementing the will of the government, acting as grassroots agents for those working at a higher level. There was a sense of co-operation. However, when confidence collapsed in 2000 all political links broke down and as a consequence the work of NGOs was also affected. Those who wanted to get together and create a new way forward were no longer working in partnership with the political leaders. Indeed, Israeli society at the moment does not believe much in the process of peace. Many Israelis are convinced that there will always be Palestinians – suicide bombers and others – who will oppose any chance for peace. No matter how much we give they will always demand more. So, it is a difficult situation to work in, because we do not know what is possible. Israeli society has a deep concern about security, and this underpins many of the policies currently being implemented in the West Bank and Gaza.

What our organisation, the YIFC, is trying to do, in the absence of a political process, is to reach out to different groups within our society to try and bring them into the process. The belief is that if more and more people engage in such work, even when there has been a breakdown in the political process, there will be a solid-enough basis not to let the situation deteriorate as much as before. We are working quite a lot at a young leadership level, with young professionals who are involved in journalism, politics and numerous NGOs, anywhere they might have influence. We try to encourage contacts with Europe, and we try to engage in international activities. We also try to expose young Israelis to young Palestinians. We try to *vision* what that future might be like after any political agreement is signed, and create a joint post-conflict agenda, because the essentials of a future settlement are already known:

a two-state solution, agreement over Jerusalem, a solution to the settlements. We need to encourage the acceptance of a new reality, where each society goes through a process of finding its *own* identity and defining its needs, and then begins working out a joint vision for the future. There is one major difficulty. Israelis and Palestinians live very close to each other geographically, but we are far apart mentally. And also physically it is very hard for us to meet, both because of severe restrictions on movement, and the fear of going to each other’s places.

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[UDA] I thought both presentations were excellent and inspiring, but what was amazing was that you all sat at the same table to make those presentations. We in Northern Ireland are far behind in that. In the future, I don’t know when, we will ultimately have to face our opponents politically, face-to-face.

[Pal] Can I say that the majority of Palestinians would not find it acceptable to sit near your enemy around the same table. But maybe the young generation, those who are working in NGOs, can do so. I believe that we have to talk with the other side, because we need peace. But for the majority of the Palestinian people it is not acceptable, and I don't dare to tell all my people back home that I met here with Israeli people, otherwise they might say I am a collaborator.

[Council] What structure do your two organisations work under? Where do you meet one another?

[Isr] We are two separate organisations. YIFC, among other things, organises a series of conferences, together with Palestinian Vision and our European partners at *dialogue lab*. Each conference brings together 40 Israeli, Palestinian and European young professionals, to discuss the EU role in the conflict. Participants create a joint vision and work in small groups on core issues of the conflict – such as Jerusalem or the settlements – and try to identify obstacles, internal contradictions within each society, and strategy directions towards conflict transformation. As for any joint work, most of the meetings we have take place outside the country. Or in Jerusalem, the only place in the country where Palestinians and Jews can meet on a regular basis.

[UDA] What common ground have your two organisations found?

[Isr] First of all, we have accepted that communication between both sides is possible. Also, we agree that young people often have more positive attitudes, and can bring new ideas, new concepts to a situation, and therefore should be more involved in the search for solutions. Young people, on both sides, are dissatisfied with the old leadership, because of its failure to create peace. Some of our existing leaders have been there 30 or 40 years, and we feel there is a need for a new, younger leadership, and to that end we try to identify which young people might be most likely to affect changes in our respective societies. Our two organisations have also identified certain activities which can be beneficial, such as learning lessons from other religious, ethnic and political conflicts, through participation in workshops such as this one. We also try to pursue concrete policy-oriented actions, such as opening European higher education mobility programmes for Israeli and Palestinian students.

[Pal] I think that the most important aspect of common ground between our two organisations is that we believe in non-violence. This is a very important thing. Right now, in news coverage of Palestine, the world sees pictures of armed people shooting into the air so they assume that Palestinians only believe in violence. They don't realise that there is a huge debate going on within the

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Palestinian community as to whether violence is right or wrong. From my point of view, as a human being, I am against killing innocent people from any side, anywhere. I can understand the reason why a young man, without a job, evicted from his house, having maybe lost family members to Israeli violence, might turn to violence, but to me it is not the solution.

[UPRG] What was agreed at Oslo? What is still to be implemented?

[Isr] I think you can say that basically the Oslo Agreement is dead. Everything that was agreed upon has been cancelled, with the exception of Gaza, but in the West Bank we are pretty much back to the pre-Oslo situation. The idea of Oslo was an interim agreement to allow for trust to be built up before tackling the major issues. It seemed logical at the time but it didn't work out.

They don't realise that there is a huge debate going on within the Palestinian community as to whether violence is right or wrong. From my point of view, as a human being, I am against killing innocent people from any side.

[Pal] There was supposed to be a Palestinian state after five years. Both sides made mistakes when implementing the agreement. In my opinion, the Palestinian leaders didn't make enough effort to prepare the Palestinian people for peace, and for a new civil society.

[UPRG] The DUP will make the same mistake, because they haven't engaged the Loyalist community, or brought in the resources for us to deal with a new civil society, the way Sinn Féin has tried to do for the Nationalist community.

[Pal] The Oslo Agreement mistake was that they postponed some of the issues to further notice, to further negotiations, which I think was fatal. They postponed the question of Jerusalem, or what to do with the five million refugees living outside Palestine, or the settlements, which since Oslo have been increasing year after year. My advice for any peace agreement here is not to postpone anything; you have to solve everything when you sign an agreement.

[Isr] Following Oslo a number of minor issues *were* agreed. One was the opening of the international airport in Gaza, the other was an international harbour and the third was a safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank, to allow Palestinians to move between the two areas. Part of my job in the Israeli Ministry of Internal Security was to act as personal assistant to the man responsible for the Israeli side of the official government negotiations regarding this safe passage. It was very successful, and part of the key to the success of those negotiations was the very good personal chemistry which developed between the two ministers representing both sides. Now, the arrangement collapsed when Oslo failed but it revealed to me that agreement *is* possible.

[Pal] Despite modern technology the Palestinians are still using donkeys; we use them to bypass the checkpoints. It is quicker than waiting for hours.

[UPRG] In all conflicts it is always poor people who are most affected.

[UDA] In Northern Ireland we normally voted not for those we necessarily wanted in, but in order to keep someone else out. We voted through fear.

[Pal] First and foremost we are all human beings, then there are things which make up our identity; in my case, which make me feel Palestinian. But when we feel under threat we get deeper and deeper into those separate identities and forget what we share as human beings. Many fears are real only in our imagination.

When we feel under threat we get deeper and deeper into those separate identities and forget what we share as human beings. Many fears are real only in our imagination.

The facilitators later summarised the major themes of the first day's proceedings:

- *Recognition is fundamental. Without recognition and parity of esteem, peace is not possible.*
- *A proper peace process is required, through which basic human needs have to be met, and all 'solutions' must address the needs of all parties involved in the conflict.*
- *Partial or single solutions are to be avoided. There must be alternative options.*
- *Processes and solutions have to be owned and driven by the ordinary people. Empowerment is paramount.*
- *It is essential to make the break from violence. Alternatives have to be created.*
- *We have to understand the importance of direct contact with the 'other side'. There must be an acknowledgement of differences. There will be risks involved. 'It takes more courage to end violence than to continue with it.'*
- *Admitting mistakes is important. It is difficult, but will win respect and help the process of trust-building and moving on.*

The second day of the workshop began with a panel presentation by the UPRG

[UPRG] Before I begin, can I say that the motto of the UFF is *Ferrens tego*, which means 'attack to defend'. Over the 30 years of the Troubles the UDA/UFF brought one of the world's most sophisticated terrorist organisations, the IRA, to a peace table, and without that effort there might not be a peace process. If we could harness that same energy and direct it into what we want to do over the next three to five years we could really make this work. Now, the CTI was a document which tried to create a vehicle, and this vehicle was to help us move

on. One of the things we did not do, and were not authorised to do, was to talk about decommissioning. We acknowledged, however, that as part of the political process we would *encourage* that all weapons be put beyond use. The document begins with a mission statement. It reads

Conflict Transformation Initiative: Loyalism in Transition is a new and innovative initiative that will assist key Loyalist activists through a process of conflict resolution and community transformation and will ultimately enable Loyalism to emerge out of thirty-five years of conflict to play a full and meaningful role in a process of reconciliation.

We want to play a role and we want to achieve reconciliation. We don't believe that Republicans really want reconciliation, so we intend to test them on it. The CTI has four key aims: (1) to work with key stakeholders, as part of a neighbourhood renewal strategy, to identify and address issues preventing community cohesion and peace-building; (2) to equip people with the skills and knowledge to bring about an end to all paramilitary activities; (3) to equip people with the skills and knowledge to reduce crime and criminality in communities; and (4) to create an enabling environment where violence is no longer a viable or realistic option and where all paramilitary weaponry is a thing of the past. Now some of the above wording was what the civil servants wanted included. Breaking it down into *our* words, we wanted to address the causes of conflict and to play a meaningful role in the regeneration of our communities. And thereby create a long and lasting peace. But to do all this needs adequate resources. If we get the resources, and we create the environment, then things will definitely happen. If we don't get the resources, then they won't happen – it is as simple as that.

Now, as we pointed out yesterday, government wouldn't go for the original CTI plan we proposed until we had completed a 6-month initial development stage. Farset have agreed to handle all the funding for us. So over the next six months we will be looking at questions such as: how do we create an environment,

how we develop strategies that will help create that environment, and how do we skill people up to be able to work those strategies? We are doing nothing more technical than that, and there will be no secret negotiations with the government, or promises that we'll do this or we'll do that; there's no hidden choreography going on.

[UPRG] I think it's imperative that we tell our membership where we are and how we got there.

We need a vehicle that brings all our people along together, and this is what the CTI is. Some of you will have read a paper I wrote a few years ago entitled 'Who's afraid of the IRA?' And I have to tell you, folks: most of our members are now afraid of the IRA. We weren't afraid of them during the fighting but we are now afraid to move on to the next stage, to face the IRA where they are now,

There will be no secret negotiations with the government, or promises that we'll do this or we'll do that; there's no hidden choreography going on.

and that's where we have to go. I also think we need a code of conduct to work from, and we need to get it out there. As long as we don't have it, people will feel they have a remit to do whatever they want to defend their communities.

[UPRG] There will be many people, especially in the middle class or within the establishment, who will argue that we shouldn't get this funding, so while we are trying to make it work we need discipline, more so now than we did during the war. It doesn't mean that we don't address problem issues which arise; a code of conduct just gives our membership a better understanding of what not to do and the mechanism of how to go about things. There's plenty of people out there who won't want us to succeed and will do all they can to hinder us. We will have five key workers and they will work on those issues together but they will also work in their own brigade areas. We are also thinking of taking a roadshow around the country, explaining things to our members, but at the same time asking them for their views and thoughts.

We're not going away, but we have to change and we have to change together, and that's what we have to focus on: how we change, how we get there, and how we get there together.

[UDA] By our nature we are reactionaries; we react to any threat to our community. But over the last ten years some of us have been able to react to that threat in a different way. In my own area we have been using conduits to get us into dialogue with the other side, because we felt that people living close to the interfaces – on both sides – were being threatened and hassled in different ways and there needed to be a joint effort made to stop this going on. And through that contact we have found a lot of common ground.

[UPRG] We're not going away, but we have to change and we have to change together, and that's what we have to focus on: how we change, how we get there, and how we get there together.

[UDA] I believe honesty is the main thing. But this won't work until we get our men on the ground to be honest with us. We have too many 'bar-room Prods', running down people like yourselves who are making an effort. Until we get our membership believing in what we're doing I can't see us getting too far.

[UDA] The lack of honesty was the result of the leadership we had. The people at the top were telling everybody lies and abusing people at the bottom. The UDA and UFF were only flags of convenience for criminals and drug-dealers.

[Council] For a long time we let the gangsters take over; we were all afraid to challenge these people, and they were doing what they wanted. And instead of this being seen as wrong in Loyalist communities, it became acceptable, and the more acceptable it became the more they exploited the situation. It's up to us to prove that it's not happening any more.

[UDA] People say that the war is over, but there is still a threat from dissident Republicans, and many of our members still believe that the war *isn't* over.

[UPRG] Nevertheless, the reality is that the war has *changed*. If we don't work out how we go forward to meet that change then we're not going to be effectively defending the interests of our people.

[UDA] There's a macho image in our organisation. If you're out trying to stop trouble at the interfaces people think you're a coward – they would rather we got stuck into the other side. And you have to explain to people *why* you're trying to stop trouble: because most people living at these interfaces, both Catholic and Protestant, are sick of all this trouble.

The reality is that the war has changed. If we don't work out how we go forward to meet that change then we're not going to be effectively defending the interests of our people.

[UDA] You have certain politicians who don't want a peaceful summer, they think it weakens their political arguments with government; so they wind things up. And the community gets confused: do they listen to the politicians or to us?

[UPRG] As Valentine said yesterday, it's easy for them to sit there and heighten tensions, but it takes more courage to say 'hold on, that's all wrong'.

[UPRG] If you look at what's happening to our people at the moment, including the increasing encroachment into our areas by Nationalists, and the fact that so many concessions are being made to Sinn Féin, it's no wonder our people feel threatened. But you cannot blame Sinn Féin for that, we can only blame ourselves, because we elected politicians who were meant to fight our corner, and they haven't. So we need to get up off our knees and face the IRA on the stage that they're now on.

[UPRG] One of the things which happened recently was that the PUP came out with a statement saying that they were going to be working very closely with Sinn Féin on a wide range of issues. Now that has obviously been ratified by the UVF. I think the PUP believe, when a new Assembly is eventually set up, that they're not going to get anything from the DUP, and that Sinn Féin is more likely to put resources their way. But we haven't made an alliance with anybody. Now, I'm not for making an alliance with the main Unionist parties, but at some stage, if we are to make this work, we have to talk with somebody who is in power and has control over resources. And is it going to be Sinn Féin, the DUP, or who? These are the type of strategic decisions that we have to make.

[Council] As long as there are dissident Republicans we need to be able to defend our communities. The CTI will only go so far when the 'D' word is bound to come into it – decommissioning – and our people won't let us decommission, not just our members.

[UDA] If Sinn Féin signs up to policing and goes into government I think *they* will sort out the dissidents. Just look at the history of the IRA.

[Council] Yes, but to me the dissident Republicans are still working to a Sinn Féin/IRA agenda. If the dissidents really wanted to derail everything and start the war again they would kill somebody in this room or a member of the security forces. So why haven't they done it? They're involved in a low-key effort which helps the Sinn Féin position without risking the collapse of everything they have gained so far.

[Council] We need to get to the stage where we will not be deflected by a bomb or a bullet. Over 30-odd years, no matter where we have set out to go, it's been at somebody else's whim.

When the DUP demanded action we provided the muscle. When the IRA killed somebody we retaliated. No matter what political ideas or aspirations we might have had they were side-lined in favour of our paramilitary side. We need to be strong enough to get ourselves to a position where no matter what happens to us, we'll look at it, take it on board and decide what's best for the whole organisation and the whole country and our part in it, and move on. We must have the strength to deal with things in a different way.

We need to get to the stage where we will not be deflected by a bomb or a bullet. Over 30-odd years, no matter where we have set out to go, it's been at somebody else's whim.... We must have the strength to deal with things in a different way.

[UDA] I agree. If anything happened to me tomorrow at the hands of dissident Republicans I wouldn't want this organisation to react in a negative way.

The participants then broke up into work groups with the task: to think about what their vision might be for Northern Ireland 10 years hence, and about the role the UDA would play in realising that vision.

Feedback: A surprisingly large number felt that integrated education was the way forward, to enable young people to become more accepting of each other's culture. A strong economy was vital, which provided jobs for all young people. Some suggested positive youth programmes to encourage young people to develop more socially responsible attitudes. Some would like to see integrated housing, though they felt communities would remain polarised for some time. They strongly believed that the police must act in partnership with the community. Everyone wanted to see the UDA legalised and playing an active role in community development work and regeneration. They looked forward to political stability within the institutions of government, which should be based on power-sharing. They wanted to see good relations exist with the other community and an end to 'interface areas', these becoming shared spaces. They wanted to see acceptance and respect accorded to all cultures, not just the two main traditions,

but the cultures represented by the new emigrants. They wanted politicians to become more accountable to communities, and some wanted to create a new politics which would reflect working-class needs. Violence and crime would be as low as possible. The threat of political violence was to be removed completely. The feedback was thorough and there is only space here for a few additional comments made during the session:

[UDA] We have to reverse John Hume's logic, when he said: 'We only need the support of 10% of Protestants to create a United Ireland.' We believe that by treating the other community fairly we can persuade 10-25% of Catholics to retain the institutions of state here, rather than seeing them as a transitional arrangement on the road to a United Ireland.

[UDA] Currently Republicans say that we cannot parade through areas which they claim they 'own'. The test for them, in terms of shared housing, is whether they are prepared to recognise our identity and facilitate its expression. If not, then they are not genuine about integration.

[UDA] Although most of us here want to be involved in community regeneration, at the same time we also want to be normal people who can sit in the house with our slippers on and not have the door being constantly rattled with people bringing us all the community's problems.

[UDA] In state schools we are taught English history and in Catholic maintained schools it is all Irish history. It is high time we all had some Ulster history.

[UDA] We hope that in 10 years' time the parades issues has been resolved, and is no longer contentious. Indeed, our parade season could be put across as a tourist attraction. It would be viewed as a festival and would no longer be seen as offensive to anybody, for there is no reason for it to be so.

[UDA] I would like to see more personal engagement between ourselves and Republicans. It's often been said to me that I am a traitor for wanting that, but is it not better to challenge all the lies they are telling about our community – face-to-face?

[Pal] Everyone here is talking about change and working towards a peaceful society. But each person should also encourage their own family members, convince them that there is the need for a change, because the community is us.

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The third day's group-work sessions focused on engagement, a crucial part of the whole CTI process. Each group was asked to address the following questions: with whom should we engage; in what way should we engage; what do we

engage about; and what obstacles are we going to have to overcome in this engagement process? (For the sake of conciseness, the different group responses have been amalgamated here.)

With whom should we engage? Our own membership; we need to create an environment where people feel safe, without fear of repercussions. Local political parties. Community organisations, although that process had already started as many members were involved in community work. Government and the civil service, including the Irish government. The PSNI, although many don't feel ready to engage with them yet. The judicial system. The international community, not only to promote understanding of the Loyalist position, but to learn how others have tried to resolve conflict. Ex-prisoner and victims groups. Social Services, education and health boards. Funders, church and religious organisations, youth organisations, women's groups, trade unions, the business community.

How do we engage with them? Through community-based projects, including cross-community projects (though it is important that one's own community feels strong in itself before it reaches out to the other community). Through workshops and seminars. By lobbying politicians and decision-makers. By working on existing networks, while trying to make new contacts. Through consultation with the wider community, with politicians, and with government. All engagement should be truthful, open and transparent. Round-table discussions, relationship-building exercises, and partnerships. Through publications, such as the pamphlet series already planned. Through the media. Through the development of our *own* media – magazines, CD-Roms, history and culture publications (so as to challenge the stereotypes which exist about our community).

What do we engage about? Community issues, things which affect our own communities on a daily basis. Social and economic issues, education, health, deprivation, lack of employment, housing, women's issues, children's issues, racial and sectarian attacks. Policing. Interfaces. Sport, especially on a cross-community basis to bring young people together. Our cultural heritage and identity. Re-involvement of ex-prisoners. The causes of the conflict. Community development and community relations. Policy-making and decisions which affect the province. Contentious issues, parading, the exiles and such matters. Equal social development. Environmental issues. Crime. Victims' issues.

Obstacles? Criminals. What the security agencies, Sinn Féin and other Republican elements do will effect what we are trying to do. Disaffected loyalists, people who aren't prepared to take this journey with us. Political parties: as we grow stronger the political parties will start to see us as a threat to their own electoral base. Statutory agencies, the government. Our own communities: they must be encouraged to stop coming to us to deal with issues which should be handled by the police. The attitude of the PUP and UVF: in some areas we have good relationships, in others we would need to build them up. Inadequate human and

financial resources. The education and skills deficit, not only within the organisation but within the community. Negative attitudes from the media. Public distrust. Our lack of confidence. Increasing unemployment and lack of jobs in our areas. Those who are opposed to change. Lack of infrastructure within our communities. The past history of the organisation. The civil servants who don't like us.

Below are a selection of some of the contributions made:

[UDA] We have to start with our own organisation first; we need more consultations, more group meetings. Then we need to engage with the community, to bring them more on board. The community needs to know where we feel we are going and what we see in the future. Let everybody know exactly where we are coming from.

[UDA] Some of our members who are involved in community work have moved into dialogue with Sinn Féin and Republicans. I should tell you how that was arranged in my own particular area. We started up a forum for the Shankill Road, Glencairn, Springmartin... which took everybody on board: politicians, the churches, women's groups, the UVF, the Loyal Orders, the Apprentice Boys. Representatives from these organisations sat on this forum and everybody had a say. If there was a decision to be made as to who you were to talk with, or what way you could go forward, it was a group decision, which made it that much more easy for individuals to get into contact with Sinn Féin, or Republicans working along the interfaces. Personally I found it very, very hard to get involved in talking with these people. The first few occasions I met with them it broke out into bitter and bigoted arguments, and almost fist-fights. But we have to engage with Sinn Féin so that we can tackle them.

[UDA] In their propaganda Republicans present themselves as the guys who are trying to sort things out, and they want a resolution to things like the parades issue. But actually when you get into talks with them you find out where they are really coming from. We were talking to this guy from Sinn Féin about a certain parade and I said: 'What would you like? We're open for discussion here.' First of all he

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started on about making it smaller. And we said: 'Yes, we'll think about that.' The next thing was: 'What about having no band?' 'Right.' Next thing: 'What about maybe only one or two Orangemen walking?' 'Right.' 'What about no flags?' 'Right.' 'No music?' 'Right.' Finally, I said to him: 'Exactly what is it that you want? Is it no parade at all?' And he said: 'Yes.' So by engaging with these people you'll see exactly what it is they're up to.

[Council] The 24th November¹⁰ will have a significant bearing on the situation, but should we wait to see what everyone else is going to do, or should the UDA decide that, *irrespective* of what happens, we set out our stall, and go there ourselves? I think we have got the confidence, the credibility within ourselves, the desire, and certainly the people to do it. So I say we should go for it.

[UDA] We had a quiet summer and we worked with everybody, UVF included, about the parades season. And certain people went to the DPP¹¹ meeting and had to sit and listen to two inspectors, one from West Belfast and one from North Belfast, congratulating themselves on their good work – and there was no mention of the UDA, the Forum or anyone else who was involved in the discussions which ensured it was a peaceful summer.

Our future actions will bring home to the people in the street just what we are about. If we cock it up this time we will not get another chance.

[UDA] This year we asked the police to stay away; we asked them to give us the authority to marshal the parade ourselves. It was a big thing for them to do, and this went right up to NIO¹² level, but they eventually agreed to it. Which meant that on one of the most contentious parades there were only two police officers. And some of the guys in this room and others marshalled that parade through the interface areas, and it went off fantastically. We undertook a training programme in marshalling, stewarding and in negotiating skills. We explained to the parade organiser that our stewards were not there to marshal the Republicans, they were there to marshal the people in the parade – the bandsmen, the lodges – and ensure that they were dignified and treated the other side with respect. We wanted to see none of these two-fingered gestures. And it all worked out well.

[UDA] The UDA and the UPRG are entering a new dawn. After the completion of this week people are going to be looking at people in this room, because we are all going to be ambassadors, whether we like it or not. Our future actions will bring home to the people in the street just what we are about. If we cock it up this time we will not get another chance.

[UDA] I think we should be negotiating with Sinn Féin. I know we have steered away from it for years because the old hatred was there, and the belief that negotiating with Sinn Féin was unacceptable. But the time is now right. Ian Paisley is going to negotiate with them. He is the man who said 'Never, never, never!' Now he's saying 'maybe'. He is the same person who climbed on the backs of everybody in this room to get to where he is today. And when he was half way there he washed his hands of us. When he marched us up hills and down the other side, we were confronted, not with weapons, but with plastic buckets – to put our money into! To support his cause. Those days are finished. We have to engage with Sinn Féin. Now, some of you might think it very odd of me to recommend that we engage with them, and will say: but what have we in

common with Sinn Féin? We have everything in common. We come from the same working-class backgrounds. It's not the upper and middle classes who have done the suffering, it's us. In normal politics most people in this room would have been voting Labour, not some form of Unionist conservatism.

[UDA] I think we know we have to sit down and talk to Sinn Féin. It's about confronting people, and it's a matter of how we start. The Palestinians and Israelis are going through the same as us: they have similar politicians who have failed them, and they too have difficulty sitting down together.

[Mol/Trans] I have heard a lot here about the fear of losing one's identity. Listening to you, however, you sound strong in your identity and I don't see how you can lose it. I have a friend whose father died while she was away from home. Her relatives, in order to get his property, didn't inform her that he had died until some time later. She said to me: 'They took everything relating to my father except the one thing they couldn't take – my love for him.' I think this plan you are trying to develop now will help you to preserve your identity. It is more important to strengthen your identity on the *inside* rather than search for confirmation of it outside of you.

It's not the upper and middle classes who have done the suffering, it's us. In normal politics most people in this room would have been voting Labour, not some form of Unionist conservatism.

On the last day the participants were again asked to break into small groups, to discuss what they considered to be the key priorities for the next six months:

[Council] We need to explain to our people what's going to happen. We need to bring them along with us.

[UDA] Funding is a priority to let us proceed, and a core element will be skills development and building on work we have already done. Also bring in other areas and their skills; they can help to support the initiative.

[UDA] As we are talking about paid workers, we need to get that out in the open. There's people, when they see funding going towards us, will say: typical, that's money for the boys. So it's important that some organisation outside the UDA takes on responsibility for the finances. We want to make it clear that the handling of all funding is transparent and independent.

[UDA] We have to build community confidence, by focusing on issues important to the community. People will be looking to us for leadership. We have to let them know that we want to get into cross-community dialogue – and to engage with Sinn Féin – to take on these people, but that we're not going to be dealing with them behind people's backs. We have to insist on the accountability of the PSNI and not let them dictate what is happening on our communities. We need a consensus in the UDA; we need to be consulting our membership.

[UDA] We need to inform our membership about what was discussed this week and how we got to this stage in our thinking. And not just the membership but their families. And we have to explain to our widows why there is this need to move on. We need to take on board the views of the members, it mustn't become a one-way process; we can replicate this workshop on a local level. We need to put our own house in order before we move on. We need to remove any excuse people might put up for not talking to us.

[UDA] While we're engaged in this process, at the same time we have to be prepared to defend our communities against dissident Republicans, criminals and drug-dealers. We need to seek to engage soon with the DUP. Some here believe that the DUP don't want to engage with us, but I think they will be wanting to, especially if they deal with Sinn Féin. We need help to see that people have the skills and the training to take this initiative forward.

We need to take on board the views of the members, it mustn't become a one-way process; we can replicate this workshop on a local level. We need to put our own house in order before we move on.

[UDA] We mustn't ignore the housing issue. If you look around Northern Ireland today you can see that there is a slow strangulation policy, with regard to Protestant areas, being encouraged by Republicans. Areas that were totally Protestant are now lost. Protestants have moved out of Co. Down and Co. Antrim, never to be replaced numerically. In Belfast there is a quiet war going on to squeeze the Protestants out and make this one big city of Catholics.

[UDA] In the next six months we really need to be making a start on what we discussed yesterday. We need to bring all our areas together to consult and form working groups. We need to hammer out a broad-ranging but not unrealistic strategy. We need human resources and funding; without that we will not succeed. We have got all the skills here and we just need to build our confidence. We will need to engage soon with the PSNI, funders and other. We had become insular and said that we didn't need to engage with these people. We *do* need to engage with these people, for they are making decisions about our lives and our communities, so we need to challenge them and anything they may do. We need to get our story out to the wider community, develop our public image. We will need to continue to work with the international community. And ending criminality is an absolute must. We should be on the policing boards and tell them how we want our communities to be policed. We need to change the legal status of our ex-prisoners; there's 5000 of them, and everywhere they go they are being discriminated against. Now, in the current situation there is no chance of getting rid of weapons. But we need to be decommissioning minds: there is a mind-set within our community that we have to change.

It was now time to bring the workshop to a close.

[Facil] I am really impressed by the amount of work you have all done this week, and if you can maintain that level of commitment, then even though it seems like an awful lot to do, with that energy there's absolutely no reason why you can't tackle the things you have identified.

[UPRG] For me it has been a very interesting week. It has certainly brought a new dynamic, especially some of the submissions. The UPRG are very grateful to all the participants, especially our international guests; and on behalf of the UDA Inner Council we extend our thanks to you all. It has helped us provide the beginnings of a road map for our own peace process. It has been a wonderful week; I am tired and exhausted. Over the next six months we will carry this work into our grassroots. The pamphlet that will result from this workshop will also help take this week's discussions into the wider community, indeed the international community. But I have seen that our own organisation is a confident organisation, confident in its own abilities, confident about the change that is ahead, and well able to help create an Ulster of which we can *all* be proud.

[UPRG] We want to thank our associates from Moldova and Transnistria, from Israel and Palestine for their participation this week. Hopefully we can make more connections in the near future. On behalf of the UDA we thank you for sharing your experiences.

Presentations were made by the organisers to the foreign participants, who in turn presented gifts from their own countries.

[UPRG] I now want to thank Diana, Paul, Ian and Lord Hylton. The facilitation we have had this week has been fantastic and I want to thank you for that. I also want to thank Jackie Hewitt and Farset's Chairman, Barney McCaughey, because without Farset we couldn't have done all this. I think history is being made in this building. But there's one more person to thank. This workshop owes much to Joe Camplisson. Although he's from the Catholic community he's been assisting the UDA in different peace efforts right from the beginning, and probably had to endure much criticism for doing so. But he stuck with it, and with his vision. I want to thank Joe for helping us along this road.

[Joe] I think that what you have demonstrated here this week is that you have the capacity to generate movement towards peace and prosperity. And it was also obvious that this coming together from different conflicts has been beneficial to those who are seeking to address each of those conflicts. I would wish you every success as you go forward. I think this week there has been a joy bubbling up in this room and that joy is infectious; it has certainly been a tonic for me.

[Pal] I and my colleagues have made a lot of friends here this week. The impression I have so far of Belfast and Northern Ireland is that it is a big enough place for all its people to share, and I hope that you will manage to live in peace.

Compared to the place where I come from I think your task is much easier, for at least you can live side by side, unlike in our own complicated situation. I hope that on my next visit to Belfast I will see peace for all.

[Isr] I would like to add our thanks for the hospitality shown to us and for the important experiences we were able to share, not just during the conference proceedings but in discussions which often lasted well into the night. It has all been very valuable to us.

[Mol/Trans] I would like to thank everyone for this wonderful week. In our own conflict at the moment there is no movement. Being here and seeing all of you so active has transferred onto ourselves some of your energy, and hopefully when we go back to Moldova we can put some of that energy to the search for resolution again. I would like to offer you all our good wishes.

[Facil] We facilitators talked among ourselves about the trust you gave us. I didn't know that I would have given that trust to an outsider. But you did trust us and we feel honoured and befriended.

Notes

(All pamphlets listed can be downloaded free from: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/islandpublications>)

- 1 See Island Pamphlet No. 79, *Loyalism in Transition (1): A new reality?* (This document will also soon be available in French and Italian via a forthcoming CTI web-site.)
- 2 A concise description of the Northern Ireland/Moldovan linkage is to be found in Island Pamphlet No. 61, *The search for conflict resolution: lessons drawn from a community development strategy*. A more in-depth account is to be found in the book *From Conflict Containment to Resolution*, by Joe Camplisson and Michael Hall, 2002, available from Island Publications (£7.50 inclusive of postage in the UK; £9.00 elsewhere).
- 3 These Israelis and Palestinians held a series of workshops in Belfast in September 2003, which are described in two Island Pamphlets: No. 57, *Reflections on Violence* (which focuses on the Northern Ireland conflict), and No. 58, *Making road maps to peace* (which focuses on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict).
- 4 Northern Ireland is known to its Protestant (and some of its Catholic) inhabitants as 'Ulster'. However, as it only comprises six of the nine counties of the historical province of Ulster – the other three being in the Republic of Ireland – many Irish Nationalists refuse to equate the label 'Ulster' with the political entity of Northern Ireland. Ironically, the nine-county configuration which most Irish Nationalists claim comprises the 'true' Ulster – the six counties within Northern Ireland plus counties Donegal, Monaghan and Cavan in the Republic – is actually of English design, for until the end of the 16th century ancient Ulster was held to include the territory now in County Louth but not Cavan. It was Queen Elizabeth I's administrators who decided to add Louth to the province of Leinster and attach Cavan to Ulster.
- 5 The 'Troubles' is a (totally inadequate) word used to describe the past 30 years of bloodshed in Northern Ireland. It was first used euphemistically for the Anglo-Irish War of 1919–1921 and the label was applied to subsequent upsurges in violence.
- 6 The Good Friday (or Belfast) Agreement was negotiated and signed in 1998. Among its provisions was a local power-sharing Assembly and a number of cross-border bodies.

Island Pamphlet No. 68, *The Good Friday Agreement: where to now?*, gives an account of a public debate on the problems associated with it.

- 7 Protestants have traditionally celebrated their religion and culture through marches and parades, many organised by the Loyal Orders. While Protestants insist that these events are simply expressions of their identity, many Catholics view them as sectarian assertions of triumphalism. In recent decades changing demographics has seen formerly Protestant areas become largely Catholic, and marches and parades along previously 'traditional routes' have been vigorously contested by Catholic residents; this has sometimes led to severe inter-communal violence. Nationalist attitudes to the marching issue are recounted in Island Pamphlet No. 64, *Exploring the marching issue*.
 - 8 A body set up by government to make decisions on contentious parades (e.g. route restrictions or outright banning).
 - 9 Following the IRA's War of Independence (1919–1921) Ireland was 'partitioned': 26 southern counties became the Irish Free State (later the Republic of Ireland), while six northern counties became Northern Ireland, remaining part of the United Kingdom.
 - 10 A reference to the deadline set by the Secretary of State, Peter Hain, for Northern Ireland's political parties to resolve all remaining obstacles to the restoration of the Assembly set up under the Good Friday Agreement; otherwise it was to be wound up. (Not unexpectedly, this 'deadline' was fudged and moved to March 2007.)
 - 11 District Policing Partnerships; set up to encourage local involvement in policing.
 - 12 The Northern Ireland Office, a branch of the civil service which effectively administers Northern Ireland in the absence of a locally functioning Assembly.
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Some Final thoughts

It can be argued that 'Conflict Transformation' is different from 'Conflict Resolution', in that the *nature* of a conflict can be transformed – such as a shared agreement not to resort to violence – without the protagonists coming any nearer to resolving their differences. However, although this workshop has shown that the UDA's objective of *transforming* the conflict is already being acted upon, statements made by the participants – which might not have been voiced even a few years ago – reveal that a desire to *resolve* the Northern Ireland conflict is also present: the expressions of support for integrated education, the call to turn sectarian interfaces into shared spaces, and a willingness to address the historical/cultural roots of the conflict.

The goal of resolution, however, will prove far more difficult to achieve than that of transformation. For a start, a new honesty will be required. Encouragingly, the demand for such an honesty was a recurrent feature of the workshop, and this is to be welcomed, for some hard self-examination still lies ahead for all sides to the conflict. The UDA/UFF will have to acknowledge that, although they talked of 'taking the war to the IRA', the ordinary Catholic community suffered appallingly. Likewise, the IRA will have to acknowledge that their violent pursuit of a United Ireland was not the pure and idealistic liberation struggle it was so often portrayed as being. The state too has to accept its share of culpability.

Nevertheless – judging by the strength of the feelings expressed during this workshop – there is no doubt that a major player in our past 30 years of mayhem and tragedy, the UDA, is now making a genuine effort to play a more constructive and positive part in building a new future for Northern Ireland.