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Olav Ofastad (2003) *Conflict management in International Peace Operations: a handbook for officers and soldiers*. Oslo, Norwegian Defence International Centre.

This book about conflict management in International Peace Operations is published by the Norwegian Defence International Centre and as the title suggests, it was written in the first place for officers and soldiers. The author of the book, Olav Ostad, is apparently not military, but has a lot of experience with international assignments in the field of development aid, human rights, assistance to refugees and vulnerable groups and also in his area of special interest, conflict management.

Through his work in international missions, particularly in Bosnia in 1996-1997, he discovered that soldiers were largely ill-prepared for peaceful conflict management. Adequate training appeared to be missing. As were books and other material that might offer support. This book is an attempt to address both needs. It is meant as a source book in training contexts and for personal preparation for missions. It also promises to be a useful tool for officers and soldiers in the field when facing conflicts.

The purpose of the book is to expand the reader's understanding of conflict and show how peace-keepers can contribute to peaceful transformation. This is necessary, according to the author, because unforeseen conflicts often arise in the field. Increasingly, international peacekeeping forces and personnel are drawn to take sides in conflicts and exposed to threats, attacks and kidnapping. All of this demands

knowledge of constructive conflict management. The book opens with a simple introduction to conflict theory and offers practical guidance on key approaches. Handling techniques and communication in conflict contexts are discussed with a view to the various challenges peace-keeping personnel may experience.

The second and third chapters of the book are short texts about, respectively, aspects of good preparation for missions abroad and how to arrange your work on arrival in the mission area. It concludes that if you are well established in the field, before you arrived, you will have, 1. attained essential knowledge about the country and your area, politically and historically, 2. gained insight into existing and potential conflicts, 3. acquired good knowledge of prevailing strategies and instructions for the mission, and 4. developed your own strategy within the framework of the missions' strategies, conflict management and peace building included. About the period after arrival in the mission area, the author remarks that it is important to establish appropriate contacts for the work, to initiate positive interaction with strategically important persons, groups and organisations, and to make sure you have good interpreters. I read two useful chapters that offer many practical recommendations and strategies.

Chapters 4 and 5 are about handling third-party conflicts, a situation where the reader as an outsider has to relate to a conflict between two or more parties, a typical situation for peacekeepers. As was the case with

the preceding chapters, this part of the book delivers a wealth of practical instructions, about how to deal with conflict situations today. Readers faced with conflict situations and peace-keeping activities can benefit from it. Two main techniques for handling third-party conflicts are discussed: mediation between the parties and intervention with one party or the parties separately. The elements of the technique of mediation are known to most of us and thoroughly discussed in conflict literature. In such a situation two conflicting parties speak together in an *in vivo* situation together with the mediator. Because of the nature of this setting, where mediation is not easy to accomplish in peace-keeping areas and seems to be impossible in a lot of cases, these chapters give psychological factors and techniques which are useful in influencing only one party, or to influence the parties separately. This important subject has received little attention in conflict literature and has apparently not been dealt with as an intervention strategy. In these sort of situations you not only need to have a much knowledge of how to influence people in a conflict situation, but also to have much experience and training in successfully handling them. Many officers and soldiers in peace-keeping areas probably have too few of these skills at their disposal. It is therefore advisable that soldiers and officers receive adequate training and supervision both in their preparatory period, as well as during the mission itself. Chapter 6 enunciates the peace building concept, which includes removing or weakening factors that breed or sustain conflict, and introducing or reinforcing factors that built positive relations and sustain peace. Interesting also was the last chapter of the book, dealing with kidnapping, an increasing problem both for international forces and civilian organisations. A typical situation is that local militia

abduct personnel engaged in peace operations, threatening to kill them in order to achieve certain goals. Again a lot of very practical suggestion are described. Situations are discussed ranging from being kidnapped yourself as well as negotiating with kidnappers who have kidnapped others. Although it is better not to get involved in such a delicate situation, you will probably regret not having read this chapter in the unlikely event of being confronted with the kidnappers.

The content of this book is an absolute must for all those officers and soldiers who are sent abroad to do their peace-keeping work. However, in most instances it would appear inadequate to simply read the book. It would be better to make it an essential part of a mission-directed training. Although the book is primarily aimed at military personnel in international peace operations, in fact anyone assigned to international missions in conflict areas, like those working for NGO's, may benefit from the information in this book.

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Symposium on Counselling and Armed Conflicts.

British Journal of Guidance & Counselling
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This issue of this journal consists of reports from a 'Symposium on Counselling and Armed Conflicts.' *William West*, who also wrote the introduction, edited it. It contains papers from five different areas of armed conflict. To me the most inspiring and challenging papers are reports on counselling in situations of ongoing armed conflict and civil war. The first one is from *Moshe Tatar*

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✧ *Gabriel Horenczyk* on 'Dilemma's and strategies in the counselling of Jewish and Palestinian Arab children in Israeli schools'. The second one is the paper from *Guus van der Veer, Daya Somasundaram* & *Fr. Damian* on 'Counselling in areas of armed conflict: the case of Jaffna, Sri Lanka'.

In the Israeli report the authors describe the conflict in Israel. Palestinian and Jewish counsellors are both trained and educated at Israeli universities. Their views on the individual assistance offered to students in distress do not differ so much because of this shared educational background. They diverge when it comes to group approaches and prevention activities. Then it becomes clear that the counsellors in the Palestinian minority also want strategies to overcome their minority position and want the historical events elucidated from their point of view. Israeli counsellors put more value on preparing their students against violence.

In the Sri Lankan case the ongoing conflict is less pregnant visible, but is always in the background. *Van der Veer* and his colleagues give an example of a long lasting (more than 15 years) search for an adequate counselling response in a discordant society. They describe an evolution that started with a private, catholic initiative, based on the personal charisma of two priests. These priests were trained in individual, non directive counselling; which when applied in the Sri Lanka communities did not work out quite well. Cultural and war restrictions stimulated towards a more community and culture bound Sri Lankan counselling. They also describe how the new trainers gradually could overcome the loss of the charismatic trainers and develop a more democratic, shared, training methodology. Another paper in this special issue that draws much attention is written by *Ian Palmer*: 'Soldiers: a suitable case for treat-

ment'. Since counsellors are mainly working with the victims of armies and wartime activities it might be very enriching to read this paper. *Palmer* describes quite thoroughly the history of western warfare, its psychiatric consequences, and the specific sub culture of the army peer groups.

Two papers deal with Balkan populations. One is from *Sabine Luebben* on 'the Testimony Method' applied in Germany. It is a clear description of how to use this method. Unfortunately, it gives little insight into the problems counsellors have to face when they apply this method in practice. From my own experience as a supervisor I learned that it can become very difficult to continue with this method when clients are experiencing stress caused by current problems. For example, when one is counselling a refugee in Western Europe, stress due to the threat of mandatory repatriation can make it impossible to continue with the testimony method.

Barbara Mitchels describes the work of *Adam Curle* in Croatia. The author seems to glorify *Adam Curle* (a specialist on peace education) and the heroism of the people in the Croatian post war period, and that does not make the article a page-turner. When the author describes how the program of *Mir I Dobro* (Peace and Good) was actually designed and executed, the reader can find many good practices of community and individual assistance.

Henry Hollanders finishes the issue with a personal perspective on armed conflict and how counselling could contribute to conflict resolution.

Reviewed by Ton Haans, clinical psychologist, psychotherapist in the field of trauma and group therapies. He has a private consultation and supervision practice.

Tribe, R. & H.Raval (eds), 2003, *Working with Interpreters in Mental Health*, Hove & New York: Brunner-Routledge, p.270

When asked to review this book I readily agreed: as I do research into 'working with interpreters in psychotherapeutic sessions' I was more than a little curious to read what other people had to say about it. Even more so as it had not occurred to me before that an entire book, from a renowned publishing house, might be devoted to dialogue interpretation in mental health. The editors of this volume observe in the introduction that 'work with interpreters has had little representation in journals or books' (p.1) and continue that 'there may be a numbers of reasons why there is not more published research and this book is an attempt to try and share knowledge and understanding and open up the debate'. I share their observations to some extent: as they say, little research has been done in this field. But I do not think there is such a lack of published material about working with interpreters in (mental) health: one can easily find more than a hundred titles, as is also clear from the references quoted in the book itself. The problem is, in my opinion, that these publications are not based on serious research. Typical publications about working with interpreters describe the authors' experience with this type of conversation and give recommendations based on this experience. Not surprisingly, different authors contradict each other on all sorts of issues. The few researchers who analyse video-recorded sessions to find out what actually happens during them are linguists who publish their articles in linguistic circles; these articles are usually not read by health workers.

A major issue when thinking about and working with interpreters is to define the role of the interpreter – this has been

described in numerous articles and many different options have been presented. A problem when assessing these different roles is that there is hardly any evaluative research into these roles apart from asking the users whether they were satisfied with the service. And the users are in a bad position to judge at least some aspects of the quality of the service: by definition they cannot completely understand what went on. This issue of the interpreter's role is also addressed in a large number of the articles that make up this book. All kind of terms are introduced: the interpreter as an advocate, as a translation machine, as a co-therapist et cetera. What I badly missed was an article which dealt with these different positions systematically and discussed the pros and cons, preferably with a review of the relevant literature and some new research on which to base the conclusions.

The level of training and competence of the interpreters described by the various authors seems divers and often not very elaborate. The authors all seemed to have opted for an interpreter whose task involves more than 'translating what the primary speakers say'. Several times it is asserted that an interpreter cannot be seen as a mere translation machine. The person of the interpreter undeniably enters the treatment as he/she is present and their 'personhood enters the relationship between the client and the professional agency' (p.138). Most authors go further than just acknowledging this, viewing 'interpreters as bilingual health workers or social care professionals in their own right' (p.190) with whom, together with the patient, one can 'jointly seek out culturally appropriate solutions to the service-user's difficulties'. In another article an example is given where, prompted by a question from the doctor about the nature of the patients'

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difficulties, the patient mentions her irregular menstruation and ensuing marital problems. The interpreter than *asks the patient's permission* to translate this to the doctor! (p.198-190) The assumption underlying this behaviour seems to be that the patient came to see the interpreter and that the doctor is a peripheral figure who does not necessarily need to be informed. It is presented as an example of the importance of briefing the interpreter before the assignment to make sure he/she knows which role to perform. It gives me the impression that we are talking here about people who work as interpreters without the slightest idea of the responsibilities that may or may not be involved.

This assignment of multiple roles to the interpreter that I have found in most of the contributions to this book goes together with a certain disdain towards the role of 'mere interpreter' (p.208). I have difficulty with this approach – for several reasons.

Firstly, I think it downgrades the profession of dialogue interpreting. Interpreting is a very difficult thing to do. Just speaking and understanding two languages does not make a person an interpreter. Besides a good grasp of both languages, interpreters need a very well trained short-term memory, they have to be able to understand empathically what people are saying and they need excellent social skills. I think that when we acknowledge the difficulty of the profession, we stop thinking in terms of 'mere interpretation' and can start to see interpreters as professionals in their own right. The skill and art needed to find closely fitting 'new words' for what someone has just said should not be underestimated.

Secondly, I think we have to be careful in defining responsibilities. In the end, health professionals are responsible for the services they deliver. This means that they have

to make sure they understand their patients. Asking an interpreter to help with that is thus a good and responsible thing to do. But it also means that the health professional should try as much as possible to stay in control of what happens during sessions. The more the initiative is left with the interpreter, the less transparent the communication becomes for the health professional and the less he can ascertain his responsibility.

Thirdly, I have noticed in my own research (analysing videotaped psychotherapy sessions with an interpreter) that the sessions in which real loss of information occurred, leading to communicative breakdown, were those in which the interpreter had the most tasks to perform. I think this has to do with what I said in the first place: interpreting is a very difficult profession and the assignment of multiple roles to the interpreter leads to overburdening, which is then reflected in the quality of the translation.

By this I do not mean to say that interpreters should be seen as translation machines: in that respect I do agree with the general ideas presented in this book. But I do think that the main task of interpreters should be to translate what people say, while at the same time we should acknowledge that 'their personhood' influences what happens in the session. Interpreter and patient should be well matched, just as therapist and patient. I was most pleased with the article about research into interpreters' perspectives on their work. This is a report of an empirical study (carried out in 1996) in which interpreters were asked about their perception of their role, difficulties experienced and possible solutions. The article would have gained in perspective if it had been related to Baistow's extensive study (2000), carried out in several European countries, on the psychological and emotional effects of their work on interpreters.

The book reviews many issues involved in working with interpreters and offers many different points of view. Most of the articles make good reading. People who have not much experience with interpretation and have read little about it may find a wealth of new information and interesting ideas here. But I do have difficulty in recommending it. One important problem is that I often find that there is not enough evidence provided for the conclusions and recommendations given, or that these are of such a general character that they are of little use to the practitioner. The book as a whole lacks a common denominator, a general framework, it gives contradictory advice and it does not go beyond the superficial. For example, on page 64 we are told that 'the most effective interpreter is one who behaves, acts and appears neutral.' On page 65, in the same article, we are recommended to 'ask the interpreter to update you on cultural matters relevant to the service user'. There is not a word about how this might affect the interpreter's neutrality in the eyes of the 'service user', about issues of 'pairing' which play a role in this kind of three-party talk, about the fact that 'culture' is not a static, clear-cut concept about which different people may inform you differently or about the possibility of asking the 'service user' himself about how cultural matters affect his life. The authors go on to say that this (i.e. serving as a cultural informant) 'may give him or her more confidence and a sense of usefulness'. Apparently working as an interpreter is not seen as useful enough. On page 67 the authors say that the clinician should 'avoid discussing issues with the interpreter that do not require interpretation', these should be left till after the session; they go on to add 'if it is absolutely necessary to deviate from this rule make sure you explain this before the

interview begins'. In addition to the comments I made above, I find it hard to think of any kind of issue the clinician might want to discuss with the interpreter during a session with his patient that would do harm when translated to that patient.

Another example comes from the concluding remarks. On p.258 the editors of the volume, Tribe & Raval, write 'a lot of hard intricate work is required to render a translation in a meaningful and understandable way. Clinicians often undervalue the skills that are required of an interpreter in being able to carry out this complex task'. Well, I fully agree with that. A little later they write that many contributors to this book advocate a broader role for interpreters where 'interpreters play a vital role as bilingual or link-workers, as advocates, as cultural consultants or intermediaries, and as conciliators' and seem to agree with this. A few lines later they add 'at the same time it is important to note that interpreters should not be set tasks that go beyond their level of skill, experience and competence'. Although this warning makes sense, it is also stating the obvious: nobody should be set tasks beyond their skill. And it leaves me puzzled as to which tasks are too great and which are appropriate for an interpreter. In general, this is my main impression of the book: it leaves me puzzled.

References

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Reviewed by Hanneke Bot, sociologist and psychotherapist, working with asylum seekers and refugees, researcher in the field of 'working with interpreters in psychotherapeutic sessions'.