
Conference Report

Alleviating Suffering, Or Preventing War?

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Ninety percent of all victims of war are civilians, and the lion's share of them are women and children. They are counted among the dead and wounded, but also among the victims of rape, ethnic cleansing, and expulsion from their homelands. Cast off into foreign lands, they live as refugees or recipients of asylum, if they are lucky; if not they are condemned to live the life of "illegals," struggling to eke out a subsistence for themselves and their families. Children who are separated from their families, by war, or who are thrown into destitution, are recruitable as child soldiers, and find in their new combat brigades a surrogate family.

This is the picture of the ravages of war, painted as if by a Breugel or a Bosch, by speakers at a conference on "Enhancing Human Security," held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, June 13-14. Organized by the Institute of Tun Dr. Mahathir's Thought (IPDM), together with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the conference gathered experts, academics, and humanitarian aid organizations from Malaysia, Thailand, Japan, Singapore, and many European countries.

Not only the suffering was depicted, but also the valiant efforts made by humanitarian aid organizations, like the Red Cross, to alleviate the suffering of the civilian populations. As Werner Kaspar, head of the Kuala Lumpur Regional delegation of the ICRC, stated, "The concept of human security encompasses comprehensive protection of an individual or population from threats in armed conflicts and wars as well as poverty and impoverishment." He said the conference would address the "respect for human dignity, the protection of civilians in time of war, and . . . the needs of refugees." The ICRC, he reported, is active worldwide, in 80 countries, with 12,000 staff.

Yet, their work is not without hazard. As Florian Westphal, Regional Communications Advisor of the ICRC, noted, the ICRC is under attack in many localities, which makes it impossible for them to deliver aid. He further cited the danger of instrumentalization of humanitarian aid, saying that if military forces are used for such efforts, for example, the neutrality of such aid groups is called into question.

Another serious problem connected to such efforts, as identified by Malaysian Minister of Foreign Affairs Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, is that interventions organized to

redress human rights violations, are often pretexts for violation of national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Here he cited the cases of Afghanistan and Iraq.

The conference participants explored in great detail these and other paradoxes faced by agencies committed to providing relief for victims of war. Political, as well as humanitarian considerations were addressed, for instance, how to provide health services to the "illegals" or migrant workers, how to deal with refugees and asylum seekers, how—in sum—to guarantee that international law, and the guarantee of human rights, be implemented for those victimized by armed conflict.

The tasks assumed by the humanitarian organizations and governments in this respect can be described only as Herculean. At the same time, the enormity of the human suffering documented, and the sense one inevitably gets, given the new conflicts that continue to break out almost weekly, that we are dealing with a tragic "fact of life," tends to reinforce a pragmatic acceptance of an unending spiral of violence, conflict, and social dislocation.

Would it not be possible to redefine the problem from another standpoint, and seek new avenues towards a solution? Would it not be possible to shift the focus of attention?

This author, who addressed the opening session of the conference, attempted to address this issue by identifying in the United States, that faction currently driving for war, and outlining the political fight ongoing in Washington and the nation, to deprive the Cheneys, the Rumsfelds and so forth, of their positions of power. So long as such a political cabal is in office, and so long as the leading superpower violates the Geneva Conventions respecting treatment of prisoners of war and civilians, there can be no meaning to international law. Those who are in violation must be removed from power. Furthermore, this author identified the causes for war—most immediately, the drive for an attack against Iran—in the financial-monetary-economic crisis: The international financial interests currently gripped by a breakdown crisis, are attempting to maintain their political power through military means. Thus, an effective war-avoidance policy must entail efforts to reform the system, to create a new, just world economic order, based on cooperation among sovereign nations, which therefore, have no cause for conflict.

Conflict Prevention

The issue of war prevention was touched upon at the conference, albeit obliquely. In one session, interfaith dialogue was discussed as a means for preventing conflict. In the final session, a round table dialogue of three speakers, including this author, with former Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad, conflict prevention was addressed. Dr. Mahathir stressed the state of human *insecurity* in today's world, citing the fact that heads of state (George W. Bush) cannot travel freely without massive security precautions, and ordinary civilians of certain nations (e.g., the United States) are targeted

by terrorism, because of their nationality. He also gave a bleak picture of the human insecurity situation in Palestine, and in Iraq.

Dr. Mahathir stressed that to prevent conflict, in the form of what is called “terrorism”—but is sometimes actually a struggle for liberation from occupation—the causes must be removed. To prevent war, Dr. Mahathir presented his concept—also to be elaborated in an international conference of his scheduled for June 20-22 on Global Peace—of organizing candidates for political office to sign pledges not to wage war, as a condition for their support. In a round table discussion, as well as in an interview with *EIR*, he cited cases in the United States, where mothers of soldiers killed in Iraq had launched such a movement.

But, no matter how noble the sentiments behind such a concept, reality—especially the brutal reality of the last five

years—teaches that pious commitments for the Good may be easily ripped apart by political pressure. How many “peace-loving, anti-war” Senators and Congressmen in Washington capitulated to the lies about Iraq’s presumed weapons of mass destruction, and voted for war?

In this light, one idea that might be presented to the organizers of the Kuala Lumpur conference for consideration, is to follow up their important exchange of ideas and deliberations, with a gathering dedicated to effective prevention of conflict, through the establishment of a world order of sovereign nation-states, committed to peace through economic development. Once such an order were realized, the ICRC and similar organizations would not be unemployed; rather, they would be faced with the happy task of repatriating displaced persons, illegals and refugees, reuniting families torn apart by war, and returning them to their nations, restored to peace.

Interview: Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad

We’re Discussing Alternatives To the Bankrupt Dollar System

Tun Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad is the former Prime Minister of Malaysia. Muriel Mirak-Weissbach interviewed him at a conference of the Perdana Leadership Foundation, Putrajaya, Malaysia on June 14, 2006.

EIR: We in the LaRouche movement are focussed on the very tumultuous developments in financial markets. Mr. LaRouche issued a forecast on April 20, saying that, unless current policies were radically altered, the entire dollar system could come crashing down by September. What is your view?

Dr. Mahathir: Well, whether or not it is that dramatic, it is certainly on the way. It will happen, unless of course measures are taken, if the U.S. were to cut spending and not live on borrowed money. The [U.S.] deficit is terrible, it cannot be paid. The only thing that keeps the U.S. going is that people still accept the U.S. dollar in payment for goods. But that is slowly being changed now. Many countries now would like to use other currencies—the euro or the yen or even gold. But the U.S. is threatening them. Even if a few countries refuse to accept the U.S. dollar, it will depreciate some more.

Considering that the U.S. is technically bankrupt, the money will have no value at all. Then the U.S. will be in a terrible state. And since the U.S. is also a big market for a lot of things produced in this world, the loss of this big market will have a terrible impact on the economies of Asia. Malaysia

is a small country, but it is the tenth biggest trading partner of the U.S.A. Our trade is valued at \$44 billion with the United States. This is out of a total of almost \$200 billion—more than 20%. So if the U.S. loses its capacity to buy, of course, it will affect all of us. It will affect a lot of other countries as well, for example, China.

EIR: In the U.S., many are pushing China to revalue its currency, which would devalue the dollar—

Dr. Mahathir: If you ask the Chinese to revalue the renminbi, you’re in fact saying that you want to devalue the U.S. dollar.

EIR: This is the reason why they’re doing it. Some in the Greenspan faction, think a weaker dollar would reduce the deficit. But since the system is a dollar system, it would have the effects you mentioned. It looks as though the dollar is doomed.

The other issue is the speculative flight into raw materials—not only oil, but also gold, silver, platinum—you name it. The prices have exploded in an inflationary spiral. This indicates in our view that speculators are thinking that if the monetary system is going under, and the dollar system is going to crash, then they want to have some “real wealth” in their hands.