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### *The Rust Workshop*

#### *Introduction*

I have recently returned from a most unusual experience, working as one of a group of staff members, facilitating an international workshop different from any in which I have participated before.

I want to write of it from my perspective. This means I will be speaking of it as a psychologist, interested in group process, intent on applying therapeutic principles to conflict situations. It might reasonably be approached from a political interface, or from the point of view of an observer interested in diverse personalities. I hope its story may be told from each of these vantage points. My account is personal and psychological.

#### *General Description*

In my opinion, a historic event took place in Rust, Austria, in the Seehotel, November 1-4, 1985. There were a number of elements that made it unique. First, it was a meeting of fifty participants who, although leading figures in government and in various fields of thought, were meeting as *persons*, not as roles - not as former presidents, ambassadors, senators, authors, or professors - simply as persons. Second, although they came from seventeen nations, they came together to focus on one area of crisis: "The Central American Challenge." Third, this was not a media event, but a workshop held in a private retreat setting - a lovely small hotel on the border of Austria, with Hungary and the Eastern Bloc countries on the other side of the salty lake that separates them. Fourth, it was facilitated by a staff with long experience in dealing with diverse attitudes and antagonistic feelings. Fifth, although only four days long, it reached a point at which individuals listened to one another, actually *heard* one another, and began to build strong personal bonds where only suspicion and mistrust had existed before.

Let me try to state the results in a more personal way. The workshop had more significance, more impact, opened more lines of communication, brought together more divergent persons than we had any reasonable right to expect. It was a deeply satisfying positive experience. We learned that people of high status, political leaders, government officials, prominent shapers of public opinion are, in important ways, just like the folks we usually deal with - they desire more

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: I have written this report, but the workshop it describes was brought into being by many individuals. Rodrigo Carazo, former president of Costa Rica, and Murray Silberman, his associate, both of the University for Peace, Costa Rica, were responsible for bringing together leading government officials from Central and Latin America. They were also helpful in inviting leaders from other countries. The administrative and facilitative staff, headed by Gay Swenson and myself, was drawn from the Center for Studies of the Person, La Jolla, California. They were the following: Dee Aker, Maria Bowen, Norman Chambers, Valerie Henderson, Marvalene Styles Hughes, Douglas Land, David Malcolm, Lawrence Solomon, Alberto Zucconi.

personal contact, deeper communication, more closeness, and more searching and intimate dialogue. These things happen *providing* - *and* that's a very important word - that we can create a climate that has elements of warmth, informality, sensitive understanding, a desire to hear, a genuine caring, a willingness to be ourselves - even awkwardly if necessary - and a skill in the facilitation of communication. Whether because of our experience or our skill or luck or Providence or whatever, we were somehow able to bring together enough of the subtle qualities of this kind of climate that extremely exciting events took place. But let me back up and give a few of the facts.

As stated, there were fifty participants in the workshop (although four could attend only one or two sessions). They were, indeed, a distinguished gathering. I have tried to divide them into crude categories. There were three ex-presidents of Central American countries, the current vice-president of Costa Rica, three from ministries of foreign affairs, seven ambassadors, seven legislators, four lesser or retired government officials; there were eight from academia, mostly professors; there were eight participants from institutes, foundations, and other organizations, several of them concerned with communication and cooperation; there were five invited primarily because they were peace activists; there were two who were invited primarily because of books they had written (although many others had also written books); there were two officials from the bank that subsidized the gathering in Austria. Many other individuals had been invited who were unable to come or declined our invitations. The seventeen nations from which the participants came are the following: Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, Chile, Austria, the United States, West Germany, Sweden, India, Poland, Hungary, the Philippines, and Switzerland, and two Palestinians living in Jerusalem.

As to staff, there were nine facilitators from the Center for Studies of the Person - two for each of the four small groups that were formed, but active also in the general group - and me; there were three translators, all from Latin American countries, all experienced in working with us; there were six administrative staff who worked literally day and night to keep things moving smoothly, getting out materials in Spanish and English, and devoting themselves selflessly to making the conference work.

### *Sponsorship and Financing*

The gathering was sponsored by the University for Peace (UP), Costa Rica, and the Center for Studies of the Person (CSP), La Jolla, California. The co-directors were Carl Rogers (CSP) and Rodrigo Carazo (UP), former president of Costa Rica and founder of the University for Peace.

In preparing for the workshop, Gay Swenson was the co-director of the team from CSP and was the responsible administrator of the project in La Jolla. Murray Silberman was actively engaged in the preparatory work in Costa Rica, working with Rodrigo Carazo.

The financing of the operation was complex. In mid-1984, Karl Vak, head of a large Viennese bank, offered to pay the expenses of the workshop at the Seehotel, and he more than kept his promise. That help, a \$30,000 anonymous gift, and \$25,000 from the Carnegie Corporation have been the largest gifts, but there have been many individual donors and two special benefits. We went ahead on faith, and the event has been held! Everyone will be reimbursed for expenses. And payments beyond that will be minimal. Payments or not, I believe all of us would agree that it has been eminently worthwhile.

### *Purposes*

There were several major purposes:

1. To bring together high-level influential figures - especially policymakers and shapers of public opinion - who were involved in international relations, especially those affecting Central America.

2. To bring a staff who had had experience in creating a climate of psychological safety in which persons could meet freely as persons, not in their official capacities, the type of person-centered climate we have created in dealing with diverse and antagonistic groups in Belfast, South Africa, and other places.

3. To facilitate free expression of opinions, attitudes, and feelings - especially in regard to the critical Central American situation - in such a way as to increase mutual understanding, reduce tensions, and foster good communication.

4. To initiate a process out of which the group would develop more trusting relationships and would create initiatives and policies that would make peaceful interaction between nations more possible and more likely.

In brief, we wanted a gathering in which influential international figures could meet "off the record" and talk, argue, shout, embrace in a situation in which the staff made it safe to do so, until they could come to know one another deeply, come to trust one another more fully and work together for peaceful solutions.

During the four days, it appears that substantial progress was made in meeting each of these four goals. During the coming year the staff will be keeping in contact with the participants to determine the degree to which their actions and their policies have been affected. Only then can we assess more fully the usefulness of this gathering.

### *The Beginnings*

Some of the apparent outcomes have already been described. By what process did these come about? As always in a person-centered workshop, it was not smooth; but gradually the group began to empower itself. Rather than generalize, I will attempt to highlight a few of the elements I observed.

By Thursday night, October 31, most of the participants had arrived and there was a brief reception with cocktails held before dinner. This was simply an informal mingling in order to begin to get acquainted. Many were suffering from jet lag and there was no attempt to hold a meeting that evening. The reception was followed by dinner, at which people sat in various informal groupings.

Friday morning, at 10:00 o'clock the workshop convened in a very comfortable room. I introduced Karl Vak as our host; he welcomed the group and spoke of the symbolic significance of our location - Rust being on the border between Austria and Hungary, which had maintained peaceful relations in spite of obstacles. I then called on Rodrigo Carazo, who welcomed the group and stressed the fact that peace is a matter of the will to peace. He particularly quoted the proverb: If one won't fight, two can't.

I thanked the various individuals and groups who had made the conference possible. I introduced the facilitative staff in pairs, mentioning that they would take part in the large group but would also, in these pairs, facilitate the small groups. I stressed that they had been selected because of their experience.

I then expressed some of my hopes for the workshop: that we could learn to listen to one another; that together we could create a climate of safety; that we could reach a greater degree of mutual understanding; that we could come to respect the other person and cherish our differences. I also stressed that this would be *our* conference, which we would create together.

I then mentioned the fact that, although we seemed to be the only people in the room, there were various unseen audiences: the people of our many countries and cultures; various church groups and friends who were hoping and praying for the success of this workshop; our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, whose world we are helping to shape.

Following this, Rodrigo Carazo suggested we take a break, which we did for about half an hour. It gave us a chance to mill about and get acquainted with various participants. When we reassembled I simply said, "Now it is up to us."

After several brief remarks by participants, there was a sharp challenge by one of the U.S. citizens. He addressed a Nicaraguan member, asking, "Why do you restrict the freedoms of your people?" and going on to specify the various ways in which the government has recently imposed restrictions. A Nicaraguan participant, a government official, stated that he regretted that the issue of Central America had started with Nicaragua, but he hoped that the participants from the United States would go back home with more facts. He then recounted some of the ways in which the United States had intervened in Nicaragua. He gave a great deal of background as to how the United States had treated Central America as "banana republics," dealing with them only out of self-interest. Now the Reagan administration was trying to overthrow a legally established government in Nicaragua. A participant from Venezuela spoke up, saying that he wanted to invite dialogue without argument. Another participant from Venezuela referred to my remarks about our children and went on to speak about the fact that our educational systems speak of violence and war. That is the history that we know. The discussion was thus gently steered away from Nicaragua. I believe that the group felt unwilling to face such a direct confrontation at this time.

It is difficult to summarize what went on during the remainder of Friday morning. People gave "presentations," which were often somewhat relevant to what had been said before, but there was little or no direct dialogue. Sometimes the presentations were introduced by tagging them onto some remark made by a previous speaker, but then going off in quite a different direction. It seemed that there was some listening and the remarks were relevant to the general topic of Central America or to the issue of peace, but persons were not speaking to persons.

In the middle of the session, Leopold Gratz, the Austrian foreign minister, entered the room with news cameras flashing. We interrupted the session to introduce him and he made a brief welcoming talk and spoke to the issue of peace and cooperation.

When our time was up, I spoke again of the small groups. A question was raised as to how they had been constituted and I explained. Persons had been preassigned to each small group in such a way as to make each as representative as possible of the workshop as a whole. The proportion of men and women, the proportion of those from Central America, and so on had all been taken into account in making up the small groups. The explanation seemed satisfactory. I also mentioned that the format was not a rigid one and if they did not like it, it could be changed, but that for today we would meet in the small groups as assigned. A staff member raised the question whether anyone objected to the pictures that were taken when Leopold Gratz was present. There seemed to be no objection. It was announced that Friday evening I would give a talk, which would be followed by questions and dialogue, and that Saturday evening Rodrigo Carazo would give a talk, also to be followed by discussion. The meeting closed.

As I was not involved in the small groups, I will leave to others the presentation of what happened in them. It is my understanding that Friday afternoon the groups were rather intellectual in nature, resembling the Friday morning session.

In the evening I met with the group in a slightly more formal arrangement, as I was the speaker. I tried to tell them of my development from a young "diagnostic-prescriptive" clinical psychologist to one who had come to trust the great potential residing within the individual for

self-understanding and self-direction. I endeavored to present the essential principles of a client-centered/person-centered approach and its developing application in education, management, and intercultural relationships. I stressed the trust that I felt in the individual, the group, and in this group. I spoke of this as an opportunity to see whether the principles that had operated in other situations could also be useful in international relationships, in building trust and improved communication. I spoke of my confidence in the group process and in the wisdom of the group. This means that I do not know precisely what the outcomes will be, or what goals will be achieved, but I can be sure that they will be constructive. I emphasized that it would be our group and this would be our process.

Saturday morning the talks and "presentations" continued, with little person-to-person dialogue. I learned later that some people were becoming quite impatient. In the afternoon the small groups showed more evidence of the beginning of dialogue. That evening Rodrigo Carazo told about the various aspects of the University for Peace. Later, in the lobby, the atmosphere began to shift. The Central American/Latin American group met together and continued talking far into the night. There was some shouting and arguing, but from the reports I heard the communication was very constructive. The remaining members of the workshop met in another group, also in the lobby. It seemed a division that was natural and appropriate at the time.

### *In Mid-Process*

Sunday morning the air was electric. The mood was very different. The atmosphere in the general session was decidedly changed. There was recognition that there was hate, as well as pleasant feelings, involved. At different times several people expressed very bitter feelings against the United States; in one case, the person was surprised to discover how deep and strong his bitterness was. Two persons spoke of being torn between two cultures - Latin American and United States. Passionate speeches were made by the Nicaraguan and by others, but these were very different from presentations. Persons were talking to persons. A U.S. citizen spoke of how powerless she felt, and this feeling of powerlessness was echoed by others from different countries. There were arguments, with people differing sharply with one another. Some Latin Americans criticized the United States because its policies were always based on self-interest, not on interest in democracy or self-government, but simply on its own economic and political interests. Several made plain their strong desire for self-determination in Latin America, without intervention from any other country. Several times the issue of male dominance of the meeting - the whole issue of sexism - was raised very emotionally. It was pointed out that there were different polarities in the session: There was on the one hand the expression of personal concerns as compared to the discussion of political issues. Would the personal and political planes ever intersect? There was the issue of men and women. Was equal coexistence possible in such a session? There was the issue of those with psychological and therapeutic backgrounds over against those who came from entirely different disciplines. At one point a participant mentioned that group therapy was not necessary here and this brought a violent reaction from a therapist member of the group.

Trust and basic goodwill were slowly developing. One participant put it well when he said that the arguments made it clear to him that some people may be misguided, but that no one in the group was malevolent. In other words, the perceptions of reality were very, very different, but no one was speaking with evil intent.

The outstanding thing, however, was that people were listening to one another; they were responding to one another; there was real dialogue going on; the group process was clearly at work. Personally, as I rested after the morning session, I felt very relaxed and truly joyful. I

knew now that whatever the conclusion of the workshop might be, it would be constructive. The process we had hoped to help initiate was under way. This was borne out by the reports that came from the small groups that afternoon.

### *The Heurigen: A Facilitating Event*

The Heurigen is an old Austrian custom. It is a celebration at the time of harvesting the grapes. New wine is drunk, usually in large quantities, and food is made available. Eduard Schmiede and the hotel staff had planned for the workshop to be involved in this celebration on Sunday night. We walked a short distance to a nearby inn where there was a large room with long tables and benches. It was barely large enough to hold all the members of the workshop, and the noise was rather deafening. As people sat and talked and drank together, many significant conversations took place, many relationships were deepened and extended. As the evening extended far into the night and the early morning hours, there is no doubt that a great deal of closeness developed that might not otherwise have come about. An American and a Nicaraguan developed plans for peaceful coexistence between Nicaragua and the United States and vowed to present these plans to their governments. Two other participants from rival countries exchanged pictures of their children and made tentative plans for an exchange of children for a period of weeks or months. There is no doubt that some mistrust was dissolved in alcohol. This seemed valuable, even though temporary.

When I walked into the room at the inn, there was spontaneous and prolonged applause. I was personally touched by this but it had a broader and, to me, more significant meaning. We, the staff, had been relatively quiet until this morning when we had taken a modest part. Up until this morning there had simply been no differences of opinion to facilitate. I had felt that the importance of our function would probably have been missed by the participants. The applause meant to me that the presence and attitudes and words of the facilitative staff, even though subtle and not intrusive, had been appreciated by the participants. This was definitely heartening. I did not, however, remain at the Heurigen for more than half an hour. The noise was simply too great for me to be involved in conversation. I could not hear or be heard, but I realized that a great deal of important communication was going on.

I would not want it to seem that all the communication was positive. One U.S. citizen made hostile and threatening remarks to a woman who had specialized in knowledge of Central America and who had an understanding of the poverty, misery, and oppression in which the revolutions found their roots. According to reports, she was visibly upset by the verbal assault on her, and it is fascinating that one of the Nicaraguan men was the first to leap to her side and persuade her that she should not let her own self-esteem be damaged. "That is the enemy," he said, indicating that a judgmental rigidity was the real enemy of progress. That the man's hostile remarks were not simply due to the effect of too much wine was indicated the following day when he repeated much the same threatening words.

On balance, the facilitative effects of the Heurigen seemed positive. New friendships were formed, intense and significant communications took place, differences were aired, mistrusts were gradually cleared away. Undoubtedly, negative feelings were also aired and certainly not all of them were resolved, but by and large it proved to be an important and generally constructive occasion.

### *The Process Peaks: Monday Morning*

The Monday morning session opened on an inauspicious note. A press conference had been planned by Karl Vak and others, to be held at the bank in Vienna at 6:00 p.m. on Monday. This would have meant cutting the afternoon session short, leaving by 4:30, but that seemed possible. Now we were told that the press conference could not possibly be held at 6:00 p.m. It

must be held at 4:00 pm. Consequently, we would have to leave at 2:30. At breakfast a list of those to attend the press conference was handed to me and I was told that they had already been invited. There was no woman on the list and I insisted that the Swedish member of parliament, a woman, be added.

This unfortunate change of the hour of the press conference was one of the few circumstances or events which, in my estimation, damaged the group process. When the change in time was announced, I at first said that I would not attend, that my first loyalty was to the whole group and its process. Karl Vak and the bank had done so much for us that it was difficult to refuse his request and I was persuaded to go. It meant, however, that ten people from the workshop were leaving at 2:30, thus effectively sabotaging any plans for a fourth meeting of the small groups or even any large group meeting during the afternoon.

The whole problem was briefly discussed in the opening moments of the general session. People wanted to know who would attend and what kind of plans could now be made. There was some apprehension in the group about what might be said at the press conference, whether it would break the confidentiality of the meeting. It was decided that there be a preliminary meeting of the group attending the press conference at two o'clock, to agree on confidentiality and on what would and would not be discussed. It was also agreed that there would only be informal groups in the afternoon and that a large group meeting would be held Monday evening. Then the substantive discussion was opened by a man from El Salvador, who was going to have to leave early and who presented some of the problems and disagreements that he had with other participants. He was disturbed about the possibility of military intervention from Nicaragua. He strongly favored the Contadora movement because it would avoid intervention from *any* other countries and would thus make external interference and intervention unnecessary. A woman spoke up to point out that the origins of the revolutions in the Central American countries existed quite regardless of external interventions. A Venezuelan pointed out that there had been no revolution in Central or Latin America that had been successful without foreign support. Revolution could not be maintained without external help. The discussion was somewhat disputatious and the man from Chile took the risk of shifting the topic. He reminded the group that in the Heurigen hearts were opened, no matter what political positions were held. He felt that there was love and togetherness that was also a part of the meetings, but that these more tender feelings were mostly expressed outside of the conference sessions. He felt sadness that the trust was not brought into these meetings.

Rodrigo Carazo spoke up with considerable passion:

I want to insist on something very important. In my small group there has been total frankness in our approach to all the problems. There has been no diplomatic language. In the political area there has been clarity. We have even been rude at times and that has been hard for me to show. Men are a mixture of heart and reason. In our small group I gave up the idea that when we talk we lose. [Meaning that if one expresses real feelings someone else might conquer by one-up-manship.] This morning that attitude of the small group is not clearly here. We are speaking in the language of hypotheses: suppose this, suppose that. I have found that sort of thinking works negatively so far as solutions are concerned. I am clear - excuse my arrogance - I want peace. I don't want the Contras or the Sandinistas to win. I want *peace*. I have no official position, no reason to keep quiet in regard to intervention on the part of either country. But last night, as L. said, there was the human will to search for alternatives in the realities of Central America. I beg from all of you here present, let us inform each other of alternatives in Central America. But let us not bring back our previous positions, our previous stance. Let's have enough humility to be spectators, to have them [the Central American countries] carry on.

Then a person from Nicaragua spoke:

I am convinced that there *are* possibilities. Before coming here, I thought the same. But what got confirmed here is that it seems to be possible that a great power will listen to a small country, and *here* mistrust *has* been overcome. Even aside from economic and political problems, there is a *lot* of *mistrust*. I hope none of us will contribute to that mistrust. The possibility *really* exists to talk and solve the problems in Central America. [Spontaneous applause from the group.]

From this point on, a number of people expressed how much meaning the experience had had for them. An American said that he was uplifted by the process and felt sure that not all the love and caring had disappeared from the sessions. A man from the Philippines, who had expected to leave earlier, stayed, although he was due elsewhere, and said that he was going with the hope that Filipinos could profit by this kind of experience. There is here a meeting of hearts and minds. He said that it had been a very deep personal experience. A speaker from Mexico stressed two themes that had been important to him: The first, the stress on the right to determine one's own destiny, a country's right to determine its own form of government; second, he was impressed that in the climate that had been created, deeper understandings had been reached. A man from Costa Rica was impressed with the fact that in the Saturday night gatherings, the groups were really person-centered but they had facilitated themselves. I remarked that "I sit here, largely in silence, and surprising things happen. The understandings that have been reached could not have been predicted or expected. A facilitative climate has been created by all of us. I feel that we have reason to congratulate ourselves, but the real test will be later." A man with a Sufi background pointed out that here peace was no longer external, peace had become an *experience*. There have been new understandings, individual and collective.

A Palestinian said that he was jealous of the conference here. He requested that those who had brought about this conference should try to arrange a similar workshop involving the PLO and the Israelis.

A high government official from Central America said that he had had many doubts as to the success of the methods we were using. He thought that to work without an agenda was disorderly, and he was very dubious. But now he thinks that we were right. He feels the methods have succeeded. The result is higher than he expected. He was very impressed with the contacts that have been made between one of the Americans and one of the Nicaraguans. He is convinced that peace begins *inside* each of us. We must try to destroy the mistrust that separates us.

A woman from the West German Parliament said that she had learned a great deal here. She hoped to use it at home. She belongs to a peace party, but when she attends one of their meetings she thinks it is a war party. She has never attended a meeting like this one, in spite of the wishes of the members. She obviously hoped she could take this process home. She said that forty years after World War II, Germany is still an occupied country. She hopes they can become a nonaligned country. The Green Party wants to achieve unilateral and unconditional disarmament by their own government. She says the Green Party is the only party of radical pacifism: "We must be the first to stop! "

Rodrigo Carazo brought up the message that had been drafted, endorsing the Contadora process. He hoped that individual members would be willing to sign this message. (No statements are being issued by the workshop as an organization.) The message can then be sent to Luxembourg, where the Contadora group is meeting with the European Common Market, to see if they can reach political and economic accord.

An American spoke up to say that the essentially human aspect of the workshop should be



uttered in a whisper. Peace is not out there but in here, inside of us. Destructive ego needs can be expressed even in peace activities and can spoil them. Our only hope is to face the great obstacles that are ahead of us. For example, he feels enormous hope in regard to the conversations he's had with a man from Nicaragua, but he realizes that a long painful process of work and talk is ahead. He regretted that more conservatives from the administration were not present. For him, this has been a marvelous experience.

At this point the Palestinian members presented lovely Israeli vases filled with flowers, one for Rodrigo Carazo and one for me. They asked that we pray that Arabs and Israelis might look in a mirror and discover that they are brothers.

The meeting closed with agreement to meet informally in the afternoon and a large group session in the evening.

### *The Press Conference*

The meeting with the press was held in sumptuous quarters in a building that the bank has restored as a conference center. The members of the press were from Austrian and German newspapers. The international press, unfortunately, was not able to come because the notice had been too short.

There were eleven people present. Rodrigo Carazo and I were there as co-directors of the project. Karl Vak was there as representative of the bank. In addition, there were participants present from Costa Rica, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Sweden, the United States, and Austria, represented by Dr. Vak. The Salvadoran, because of early departure time, was completing his statement when we arrived, and I do not know its content. The other ten participants all spoke of the workshop in favorable terms. Karl Vak, who had attended only the initial session on Friday and the most recent session on Monday morning, said that the two sessions were like night and day. The first was so full of tensions and in the second the spirit was truly fraternal. The participant from Sweden suggested that the UN Commission on Building of Trust, which meets every year in Stockholm, should utilize the same person-centered approach in their sessions, and she hoped that they would invite us to facilitate their work. One of the Americans and the Nicaraguan both spoke of the bonds they had developed during the workshop and the fact that they planned to meet again in Paris, to continue making plans that they would transmit to their governments.

It was a first opportunity to assess the outcomes of the conference, and the fact that all of those present felt that the workshop had been a useful experience was encouraging. The press reports corroborated this positive note. The workshop was called "an unusual political and psychological experiment." It was emphasized that the person-centered approach might be "the catalyst of a long-lasting peace process, and should also be applied to other politically explosive zones of the world."

### *The Final Session*

The group met again on Monday evening, although a number of members had already left. There were three major elements to the session. Participants continued to express the positive meanings the workshop had had for them. I feel that insufficient effort was made to draw out any possible negative feelings. The second element was the presentation of the report mentioned by Rodrigo Carazo in the morning - a statement supporting the Contadora process, which people were urged to sign. A third element was the presentation of a declaration by John Vasconcellos strongly affirming the usefulness of the person-centered approach in the reduction of tension, both in this conference and possibly in other areas of international crisis

as well. The meeting ended with many fond embraces and hopes of meeting in the future.

It seems clear that for most of the participants this had been a very meaningful and useful experience. We know of at least one person who felt very negatively about the workshop. I am sure there must be others. We are trying hard to collect all the data that would give the complete picture. But essentially, substantial progress was made in meeting the purposes that brought the workshop into being. Tensions were reduced. Lines of communication were opened. There was an experience of peace.

### *One Week Later*

The real test of the workshop will be in the months that follow. Nevertheless, the meaning that it had for one participant is contained in a letter that was written eight days following the end of the workshop. Excerpts from the letter follow.

Thank you for a very important experience! I think the result of those four days is amazing, changing hostility to trust. I do wish your method will be used in many peace efforts.

For me personally your way of meeting me I think will change my life. My beloved grandfather used to tell me not to "apologize for being" and he used to like it when I stood up for inconvenient points of view. But that was long ago. Now, when you said "Don't apologize!" in that very earnest way, I felt accepted as I am.

I used to think that there really was nothing I honestly would like to do. Now life seems full of bright prospects. I feel that I am all right the way I am and if people don't think so I don't really care. My emotions are close to my consciousness and I have warm feelings for most people, also those I used to dislike.

Of course I realize this can be some sort of euphoria, but the calm happy feeling grows in me. I am reading your book and it gives me great joy!

In the participants' questionnaire I answered "quite" on the question of how useful the workshop experience had been to me. Now, after a week, I would not hesitate to answer "extremely!"

Not all comments were favorable. Another participant, also writing some days after the conclusion of the workshop, was disappointed in the composition of the group. Not enough power was represented, particularly from the United States. The sessions also came in for criticism. There was "rarely a consistent thread to a discussion.... We were never clear whether to discuss substance or personal attitudes; either would have been fine, but . . ."

From the information available thus far, it appears that a large majority regarded it as a very positive experience, but some were dissatisfied.

### *Mistakes and Disappointments*

Let me turn to some of the inadequacies we recognize. One of the difficulties in preparing for the workshop and that continued through the workshop was that there was inadequate communication and inadequate understanding between the cosponsors. Distance made it very difficult to keep in close contact. The fact that we came from different cultures and different ways of thinking added to the deficiencies in our communication. I believe that we probably

both underestimated the contribution that the other was making to the workshop.

Our translators, who served so brilliantly in very difficult situations, made us aware of the fact that because of cultural differences and differences in our respect for protocol, we often offended members of other cultures.

It is undoubtedly true that the facilitative staff did not mingle sufficiently with the other participants. This came out of a puzzling no-win situation. It was essential that the staff keep in solid communication so that our unity would help the unity of the group. It was also essential that we serve as a support group to one another in a new and challenging situation. This meant that we met early in the morning and also at the end of the day, after the small-group sessions. Consequently, our opportunities to mingle with the participants at breakfast and at dinner were limited. It is probable that, to many, we seemed aloof because of this. At the time, we could not see any way of remedying this deficiency.

A major disappointment was that the administrative of the U.S. government was not represented in the workshop. We had worked very hard on this, particularly with the help of John Marks, and had been able to gain a number of acceptances - one sure and one possibility from the State Department, another significant government official, and several close advisers to the Reagan administration. We know that one official of the administration was highly enthusiastic about the workshop and eager to attend; yet only days before the workshop was to start, all U.S. administration officials and advisers canceled their acceptances without explanation. It made for a most unfortunate gap in the process of the workshop.

### *Reasons for Effectiveness*

The workshop appears to have been even more effective than we had dared to hope. What are the reasons behind its apparent success? In my judgment, there are many such reasons, some of which we can take credit for; others were due entirely to circumstance or good fortune. I will comment briefly on a number of the elements that I see accounting for the results achieved.

1. The general idea behind the workshop was sound and appropriate. Initially, the aim was to reduce international tensions by inviting leaders influential in policymaking and opinion shaping in international affairs to meet in a workshop facilitated in a person-centered way. As this aim evolved and changed it became more specific and more complex. It was to focus on one area of tension, specifically Central America; to invite such significant figures, not only from the countries involved, but from other nations concerned about peace; to hold the gathering in a place with minimal distractions; to make it private, unofficial, "off the record," confidential; to utilize a facilitative staff experienced in the person-centered approach and in dealing with groups containing differing, antagonistic, or even hostile factions.

This whole pattern of aims appears to be an idea whose time has come, if we can judge by the intense and widespread interest it has generated.

2. A good theme was chosen for the workshop: "The Central American Challenge" points to a critical international situation, yet it is one in which persons are still willing to talk with one another and which is not yet as frozen in rigidity as the EastWest confrontation. We were fortunate that the University for Peace insisted on this theme. We had initially thought of a workshop without a theme, but clearly this would not have attracted suitable personnel.

The theme was unexpectedly valuable in facilitating the process. Because it focused the interactions, there was none of the quibbling about minor issues that often occurs in a workshop. Because the theme involved issues of life and death in Central American countries, the interactions were always serious in intent, and almost no extraneous matters were brought into the sessions. The theme kept us together, was a unifying influence.

3. We were fortunate in our co-sponsor. There is no doubt that President Carazo's worldwide contacts enabled him to bring together, in spite of many obstacles and one period of despair, a notable group of persons of high status from Central American, Latin American, and European countries.

It was the fact that this was a high-level group with influence on international policy and influence on shaping of national and world opinion that gave the workshop much of its significance. A similarly successful workshop composed of individuals from the same countries but made up of persons without special status would have had little later impact. This group, on the contrary, is likely to have a considerable impact in various quarters.

4. The approach to the workshop was not an experimental approach. It was something that had been tried again and again in very diverse groups and in groups containing hostile and antagonistic factions. Consequently, the staff knew in general what they might expect and were not panicked by any of the overintellectual or disorderly events at the beginning of the workshop. Experience, in other words, paid off.

5. It was an excellent facilitative staff. Because they had worked together, because they had dealt with sharp differences and anger and bitterness, they were not easily frightened. Their trust in the group and in the group process was very deep. This was an exceedingly difficult workshop, because so many of the people had no idea of the kind of group process that they themselves were helping to initiate. It was also difficult because many of the participants were deeply distrustful of other participants or of the viewpoints they represented. The group was also sophisticated and accustomed to talking in public, so that, in many ways, they facilitated themselves. It could be said that this was not a demonstration of person-centered procedures; it was a demonstration of a person-centered way of being on the part of the staff that helped to create the climate. (In fact, some of the participants who are knowledgeable about group dynamics were quite disappointed that I and the staff did not "demonstrate" person-centered techniques.)

6. It was an excellent setting for such a workshop. It could not have been better. It was a real retreat, free of distractions, in a small village, yet the accommodations were very comfortable, the food was excellent, the service good, so that there was nothing to distract the participants from their meetings together.

Because the bank and the project helped with the expenses of all participants, they were essentially guests, not tuition-paying members. Perhaps this helps to account for the fact that there was almost no criticism of accommodations, meals, schedules, or staff - criticisms that often occur.

7. We chose what seemed to be just the right amount of structure. Whether this was good judgment or good fortune, it is hard to say. At any rate, the format of a large group in the mornings and preassigned small groups in the afternoon gave people a feeling of security. The sessions were further structured by having a theme. This common focus gave the group a unity it would not otherwise have had. The reason for thinking that this was just the right amount of structure is that there was none of the arguing or bickering about schedule, assignments, and format that so often accompanies a workshop. To our amazement, there was not even a discussion about smoking or nonsmoking. Smokers simply went to the door of the room whenever they wished to "light up," without the matter ever having been discussed.

8. It appears to have been a wise choice that the media were completely excluded. This made it much easier for people to be themselves, both in the small groups and in the large.

9. To be faced by no set agenda must have been shocking to some of the participants. There is no doubt that it was regarded as a strange procedure. Yet our past experience showed clearly that the group would gradually seek out its own personal and collective agendas. This view was justified by the experience at Rust. It was pleasant to have the wisdom of this choice

confirmed by at least one important participant.

10. Many of the above elements entered into the fact that all of us - the facilitative staff, the administrative staff, the hotel staff, the participants - were successful in creating a climate in which there could be freedom of expression for both negative and positive feelings. The establishment of such a climate is an extremely subtle process. There is no doubt that the facilitative staff played a large part in this, and yet the staff was joined by many of the participants in bringing this climate into being. It is important to note that there was enough freedom that other modes of encouraging group process could be utilized. For example, there were those present who had used other procedures in reducing tension and negotiating conflict resolution. Eventually, these approaches were used, not in the sessions of the workshop, but in the informal gatherings outside the regular sessions.

11. One final element is our good fortune in being in Austria at the time of the Heurigen celebration. There is little doubt that this ancient custom helped to build closer ties. Our celebration of it came at exactly the proper moment in the dynamics of the workshop. It was one of the circumstances that helped to make Rust the memorable event that it was.

There is no conclusion to be drawn at this point. We have taken a first step. We have set a precedent. It is to be hoped that this will be followed by other person-to-person workshops, based on, and learning from, the gathering at Rust.