

CROSS COMMUNITY

(A first try)

1. **A Community with differences**

A community only can exist when there are differences. If everybody and every group is exactly the same certainly very big difficulties arise. People and groups will rival like mad to become different and so they will destroy the community. People can live in peace, just being different, because they have a common transcendence, Christianity, the state they live in, civil ideals. To put it in a diagram:

2. **A Divided Community**

There occur deep changes when the community becomes really divided. The common transcendence is dwindling away. It is not just disappearing, but more and more it is replaced by the transcendences of the different groups in which the community is divided. In Northern Ireland, instead of Christianity for one group it is the Roman Catholic Church, for the other the Protestant Churches. For the one group the UK, for the other group the Republic of Ireland. The direct result is, that the rivaling of the groups, which is already the origin of the division, becomes stronger and stronger, destroying more and more the common transcendence. In a diagram:

3. **A Community, destroyed by rivaling**

As soon as groups, which together form the Community, rival in that manner, when the rivaling is not checked by the common transcendence, then the rivaling is like a plague. The rivaling between the groups becomes stronger and stronger. Murder and terrorism become normal. And the rivaling becomes a part of all the relationships in the groups itself. Terrorists who exist to defend the interests of the group they belong to, become racketeers of their own group, murdering again their own members who are against it.

In the fights, who wins the different between a fight between members of different groups and members of one group become smaller and smaller. Again in a diagram.

4. **Community work**

The result of all these power games, all this rivalry in the Communities is that Community as such is more and more disappearing. The more so because one of the results of the rivalry is, that people become more and more the same and that again is a major origin of rivaling. So, of course, the question arises if it is possible to do methodically something against this movement into destruction and chaos, to do something like Community work.

A big setback, and in the same time a big difficulty and challenge is, that it does not do any good to do Community work within one of the divided parties of the whole of the Community, with the values and presuppositions of that part of the whole. We then only strengthen if we do anything at all, the group we work with to fight better against the other. The division and the growing chaos go on. We support and strengthen the diagram 2 and so diagram 3.

5. **Cross-community work**

So in fact there is no Community work worthwhile when it is not cross-community work. When the community work does not have as its goal to go back, in one manner or another, to the situation of diagram 1. What does this in fact mean? Which are the conditions for Community work to make it worthwhile?

- 5.1 It can only be done in the knowledge that there is no real community, which does not accept the existence and the own rights of everybody in the country, in Northern Ireland.
- 5.2 It only builds community if all sectarianism, whichever, is unmasked so bringing people in a broader, a wider world, with more freedom.
- 5.3 It has to make clear, time and again, that differences are not a threat, but in fact enrichment and a necessary condition to live in community at all.
- 5.4 It has to know about a common transcendence, which is transcendence for everybody in the country. This might take many forms and it is very worthwhile to think more about this.

- 5.5 It has to be done in a freedom, which makes it possible not to be enslaved, by the rivalries and the (sectarian) convictions and ideologies of the members of the different groups. Again, it is extremely important to find more clearness how to find this freedom. Finding it is a condition to do Community work, which, when it is worthwhile, always is Cross-community work.
- 5.6 Cross-community work does not mean automatically that it is work with members of opposing groups, coming together, although this meeting in the end is of course necessary. There can be, and probably has to be much preparation, both of the members of the groups and of the persons who are responsible for the groups. Here too there are many possibilities, and probably to begin with many impossibilities, about how to meet each other, in which form, continually intermittent, and so on. Here too, probably, much clearness still can be found.