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Renewed Demobilization in Eritrea

by *Amanuel Mebreteab*

Unfortunately, the peace which followed three decades of civil war over Eritrean independence only lasted seven years. War broke out between independent Eritrea and Ethiopia in May 1998, triggered by a border dispute. Eritrea embarked upon a rapid and massive process of rearmament and remobilization. By mid-2000, Eritrea had an estimated 300,000 people under arms—more than at any one time during the liberation struggle. The battles fought were extremely violent. Tens of thousands of people were displaced, and in May 2001, the number of casualties on the Eritrean side was stated to be 19,000.

Eritrea and Ethiopia signed an agreement to end hostilities in June 2000. This was followed by a comprehensive peace agreement in December providing for the delimitation and demarcation of the border and the release of all prisoners of war and others detained as a result of the war. The UN Mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) monitors the disputed border and facilitates through mediation.

The war has largely reversed the benefits which independence and peace had brought Eritrea after 1991. The economy is currently in very bad shape as about half the labor force was involved in the war, much of the country's infrastructure and industry has been destroyed, and government revenue dramatically reduced. The social infrastructure—health centers, hospitals, schools, water supply—has also suffered badly from the war. Landmines hamper the recovery of the agricultural sector, making almost two million Eritreans dependent on food-aid.

Since late 2000, the Government has been actively planning and preparing for the demobilization and reintegration of up to 200,000 soldiers in a program expected to begin in October 2001 and last up to five years. In order to help implement the program, a socio-economic profile was created in March 2001 based on a

survey among a representative sample of 3000 soldiers. The findings showed that:

- 10 percent look forward to continuing their education.
- 10 percent wish to undergo training that generates immediate employment opportunities, (self or wage employment).
- 30 percent want to return to their former occupations in Government, private and own enterprises.
- 35 percent will go into farming.
- 15 percent claim that they suffer various minor and major health problems, (subject to further investigation).

The National Commission for Demobilisation and Reintegration Programs (NCDRP) is designing measures to assist the reintegration of ex-soldiers into civilian life. The main components of the program are:

- Training,
- Employment opportunities,
- Credit facilities, and
- Psycho-social-medico support.

Conscious of the need for a Common Strategic Plan, the NCDRP held a workshop from 21–23 August 2001 in order to:

- Draw up an overall strategic framework for the program to be used by all partner organizations;
- Design plans for each component of this framework;
- Indicate a policy guideline procedure and tools for the design, preparation, conduct, and evaluation of training interventions;
- Chart future relations and follow-up inputs (networks, joint ventures, resources, training needs, strategies).

The upcoming demobilization will be very different from that following the civil war. The numbers involved are much larger and the profile of those who are to be demobilized is dramatically different from that of the

highly motivated liberation fighters in the early 1990s. This time, the ex-combatants are predominantly conscripts. The traumas caused by the atrocities of the recent war are likely to have a major impact. The socio-economic and institutional environments to which the ex-combatants will return also differ from those in the mid-1990s. Then Eritrea received relatively little international support towards demobilization, resettlement and reintegration, with only ten percent funded through external sources. Given the country's current economic situation, the Government is discussing the possibility of obtaining US\$ 50 million in World Bank credits and nearly US\$ 150 million in grants from various international agencies and bilateral donors in support of the program. Other donors pledged funds at a conference in Asmara in September.

The NCDRP will conduct a pilot demobilization scheme in October involving approximately 5,000 soldiers. The lessons learnt will be incorporated into the program design before the first phase of demobilization begins in mid-December 2001. However, all this depends on how far peace is maintained. Ethiopian soldiers are still in the temporary security zone and this is currently one of the main obstacles to proceeding with demobilization in Eritrea.

The Eritrean process of demobilization and reintegration is seen in the context of a broader process of social reconstruction and nation-building. It is very important that the NCDRP devises an integrated approach and institutional set-up encompassing all categories of support measures from relief to development.

Dr. Amanuel Mehreteab is currently program manager with the National Commission for Demobilisation and Reintegration in Eritrea. He was a fellow at BICC in 2000, conducting research into demobilization and reintegration issues.

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The Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) is an independent non-profit organization dedicated to promoting and facilitating the processes whereby people, skills, technology, equipment, and financial and economic resources can be shifted away from the defense sector and applied to alternative civilian uses.

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Staff Spotlight:



Mary Foster

Mary Foster joined BICC in September 2000 as a junior researcher. After completing her Masters in Political Science at McGill University in Montreal, Canada in 1996, Mary went on to work for the NGO Mines Action Canada, part of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, for almost three years. Her varied tasks at Mines Action Canada ranged from public outreach activities, to tracking Canadian landmine stockpiles, to developing strategies for engaging rebel groups in the landmine ban. She also worked briefly for Physicians for Global Survival, the Canadian branch of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War network, on nuclear weapons issues, and for CIET international, on a book making the case for a development-oriented approach to landmine clearance. She has been active in various grassroots initiatives in Canada, including campaigns for reducing military spending and for limiting the role of Canadian corporations in violent conflicts overseas.

At BICC, she is currently working on an edited volume on conversion as a peace-building activity and is also supporting the production of the annual Conversion Survey. Her peace research interests, inside and outside BICC, currently include the interaction between corporate globalization and militarization, peace-building from a psycho-social perspective, and nonviolent alternatives to military force in crisis intervention.

Mary is enjoying living in Germany—despite her poor grasp of German—and exploring other parts of Europe. She hopes to spend more time in Berlin and in some of the other wonderful European cities before returning to Canada.

For further information please contact
→ Mary Foster at foster@bicc.de

New Director of BICC nominated

At its last meeting in June, BICC's Supervisory Board nominated Peter Johannes Croll as the Center's new director. A practitioner in the field of international development cooperation, Peter Croll will join BICC on 1 November 2001 prior to taking over from Herbert Wulf as Director on 1 January 2002. Peter Croll was born in Germany and studied economics and languages. Following assignments in the private sector, he has spent 20 of his almost 30 years of professional experience in the field of aid and economic cooperation, e.g. working for the UN Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) in Mexico and thereafter in projects in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Kenya, as well as working in senior management positions at the headquarters of German Technical Assistance (GTZ) in Eschborn. Peter Croll is currently Country Director of the GTZ in Kenya.

For further information please contact

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BICC Meetings During UN Small Arms Conference

The UN held its first official conference on small arms from 9–20 July. The resulting Programme of Action (A/CONF.192/15) disappointed many by failing to address key aspects of the problem. However, it does contain provisions that will help to curb the proliferation and misuse of small arms. BICC was involved in several meetings held on the margins of the conference.

Working together with other institutes for disarmament studies, as well as UN agencies, German Technical Cooperation, and the German Foreign Office, BICC organized two consecutive meetings on 10 July to discuss *Practical Disarmament: Weapons and Development*. The first was a workshop hosted by the German mission to the UN, which was opened by Ambassador Dieter Kastrup and chaired by Dr. Patricia Lewis (UNIDIR) and Dr. Sverre Lodgaard (NUPI). Speakers were Dr. Ivor Fung from the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, Anatole Ayissi from the UN Institute for Disarmament Research, Nora Kushti from the Albanian office of UNDP, Bernd Hoffmann from German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Neb Sinthay from the Working Group for Weapons Reduction in Cambodia, and Peter Marwa and Sami Faltas from BICC. The speakers reviewed field experiences with weapons collection and disposal in a development context in various parts of the world.

This workshop was followed by a briefing at UN headquarters. The key-note speech was delivered by the

United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Jayantha Dhanapala. Other speakers were Reinhart Helmke, the executive director of UNOPS, Walter Schmid of the German Foreign Office, and Raymond Johansen, the Norwegian state secretary for foreign affairs. Under the chairmanship of BICC's director Herbert Wulf these policy-makers discussed what governments need to do, at the national and international level, to meet the challenges of practical disarmament.

Similar meetings were also convened by other organizations. On 11 July, UNDP held a workshop at its New York headquarters, at which field officers from various parts of the world discussed experiences with weapons collection and demobilization. On 12 July, they reported their main conclusions during a public panel discussion at UN headquarters. Both meetings were facilitated by BICC researcher Sami Faltas.

Papers presented during the BICC meetings of 10 July are available at www.bicc.de.

For further information please contact

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Meeting of BICC's International Board

BICC's International Board met at the headquarters of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in the famous Chrysler Building in New York on 11 July, in the margins of the UN Conference on Small Arms. Reinhart Helmke, Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UNOPS, was elected new chairman of the International Board. BICC's Director Herbert Wulf and the members of the board thanked Anke Brunn, former Minister in the State Government of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) and driving force behind the foundation of BICC, for her excellent work as chairman of the board. Herbert Wulf presented an overview of BICC's work program, highlighting selected projects and ideas. The program reflects the trend towards complementing BICC's 'traditional' activities with topics related to 'proactive conversion' on a flexible basis. The board members stressed the importance of accepting the new challenges of changing interrelations between military and civil activities, and supported the approach of including topics such as civil-military relations, transparency in military matters, post-conflict reconstruction, UN arms embargoes, and security sector reform in BICC's work. They emphasized that BICC had struck a good balance between focussed research and diversity.

For further information please contact

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BICC Publications

In addition to its annual *conversion survey*, the BICC publishes *reports*, *briefs*, and *papers*. These series analyze the international conversion process, report on conversion projects and experiences, and offer scientific as well as practical know-how. Further details can be obtained at www.bicc.de/publications/.

Brief 19: Ksenia Gonchar and Thilo Roettger, *Assisting Conversion and Company Restructuring in Moldova*, September 2001.

Michael Brzoska. 2001. *Smart Sanctions, The Next Step—Arms Embargoes and Travel Sanctions*. Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden.

Forthcoming:

Brief 20: Andreas Heinemann-Grüder and Wolf-Christian Paes, *Wag the Dog: The Mobilization and Demobilization of the Kosovo Liberation Army*, October 2001.

BICC Notes

Shukuko Koyama, a graduate student of peace studies, began an **internship** at BICC in mid-July and is working mainly for the *Help Desk for Practical Disarmament*. Shukuko, who is from Japan, will soon enter the PhD program at Bradford University, United Kingdom, where she plans to write on security sector reform.

For further information please contact

→ Shukuko Koayama at koyama@bicc.de

BICC together with the Ethiopian NGO, Peace and Development Committee (PDC), organized a Workshop on ***Small Arms in Different Regions of Ethiopia—Local Small Arms Control: Possible, to what extent?*** in Ethiopia from 27–30 August. More than fifty participants from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Germany discussed measures to curb the demand for small arms and light weapons in Ethiopia and tried to identify methods to curb illegal trafficking in these weapons.

Further information can be obtained at www.saligad.org or please, contact

→ Renée Ernst at ernst@bicc.de

Kees Kingma visited Rwanda from 24 July to 4 August 2001 to assist the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in planning support for a **new phase of the Demobilization and Reintegration Programme in Rwanda**. The Government of Rwanda is currently preparing for the demobilization of part of the Rwandese Patriotic Army (RPA) and making arrangements to provide reintegration support to former members of the Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) who did not join the RPA. A key issue still to be dealt with is the type and extent of support that will be provided to the returning forces of the Armée de la

Libération du Rwanda (ALIR—also known as ex-FAR/Interahamwe) once they disarm as part of the 1999 Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement for the Democratic Republic of Congo.

For further information please contact

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The exhibition *Conver:Art—The Art of Disarmament*, which was presented by BICC in eight German cities and in Paris, can now be seen as a **virtual exhibition on the internet** at www.bicc.de/general/converart/. Take a “Walk through the Exhibition”, see the works of the participating young artists, including paintings, collages, photographs, film and video projects, sculptural and architectural designs, installations and happenings.

For further information please contact

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Two **Canadian interns** from our Canada-based partner organization Project Ploughshares joined BICC on 1 September. **Isabelle Masson** will be working on the SALIGAD project. **Mark Sedra** will be working on the Northern Ireland Peace Process and issues related to military expenditures.

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→ Isabelle Masson at masson@bicc.de and Mark Sedra at sedra@bicc.de

Two new fellows will join BICC on 1 October 2001 under **BICC's fellowship program** for capacity-building on disarmament, conversion and peace.

Myeong-Chin Cho (South Korea) will conduct research on the *Restructuring of Korea's Defense Industry: Challenges and Obstacles*. **Lucien Mufor Atanga** (Cameroon) will work on *Sustaining Post-Conflict Disarmament and Development in Chad*. A full description of the fellowship program, the selection criteria and the application procedure can be found at www.bicc.de/info/fellowship.html.

For further information please contact

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Upcoming BICC Event

BICC is organizing a further conference on base closure issues: *Conversion in North Rhine-Westphalia—New Challenges following the Restructuring of the German Armed Forces*, which will take place in Minden on 22/23 October 2001. About 150 communities will be affected by the reform of the German *Bundeswehr* over the next five years. The conference will offer participants an opportunity to exchange information, experiences and opinions within the framework of various best-practice workshops. Contact: Lars Fischer at fischer@bicc.de