

Marc-Laurent HAZOUMÊ

**AFRICA AND THE
DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGE**

**An Essay on Adult Education for Democracy
and the Culture of Peace**



**UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE)
Hamburg, 1999**

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Feldbrunnenstr. 58
20148 Hamburg
Germany

ISBN 92 820 1092-9

Printed by
Druckerei Seemann GmbH & Co.
Neumann-Reichardt-Str. 27-33
Haus 8
22041 Hamburg

Cover picture: School class held in the shadow of a tree in Narus, a small village in Eastern Equatoria, March 1995, World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland

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FOREWORD

As is widely known, the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education was held in Hamburg, Germany, in July 1997. One of the major themes, which shed appreciable light on the world political and social situation, was "learning in adulthood and democracy".

Given the numerous conflicts and wars that many countries in the world are experiencing, there was indeed an urgent need to address this topic during the conference. Shared consideration of all these issues was hence useful in an attempt to understand the real causes and to find some potential solutions. However, while every continent may be affected, Africa is worst afflicted because of all the political, economic and educational problems which it faces. As can be witnessed constantly, these situations give rise to conflicts such as those that are occurring on the continent today. Other forums have also tried to find the causes of these developments in order to lead people to engage in meaningful dialogue, and to promote a culture of peace. This essay sets out to help in this process, and summarises earlier reflections on the issue of democracy and the culture of peace. It is also intended to be a small step towards the advancement of the new political order in Africa which will, we hope, stem the tide of evils that are giving rise to wars and the steady exodus of the population.

INTRODUCTION

For many months, an armed conflict has been raging in one of the largest countries on the African continent, the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaïre). This is a country that arouses covetousness on account of its fabulous riches. The misery caused by any armed conflict and the resultant distress are exacerbated by the problems facing most countries in the world today. Thousands of people, especially young people, are living acutely precarious lives because of unemployment. Even when work is available, the sub-human conditions under which it is carried out strip it of any positive, edifying value. In the field of health, the ravages of the new diseases that are now appearing in Africa have grown worse. The want of human and material resources makes their eradication even more uncertain. At the cultural level, Africa has one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world, despite the efforts continually being made by governments. The disparity between men and women in this field is still extremely disquieting, indeed indecent. At a time when humanity is turning a new page in its history and entering the third millennium, it is self-evident that the challenges facing the continent are manifold and seem at first sight difficult to overcome. Despite the hope cherished by everyone in the old refrain "between now and the year 2000", events have been moving faster and consistently outpacing our thinking. It is as though Africans, because of and in spite of themselves, are held back by some sort of blockage, and cannot keep up with the hectic rate of world development. In the light

of this apparent failure, and in order to escape being easily manipulated or taken over, every one of us must react lest we see our hopes destroyed, and must yet make our continent the powerhouse that the world cannot do without, a world to which we no longer seem to belong. For this to come about, many obstacles must be overcome. The evils afflicting Africa and preventing its steady advance towards progress and the happiness of its peoples are very destructive. The various conflicts to which it has been and still is subjected today are palpable evidence of this. It therefore seems beneficial to try, like many others, to examine the causes, especially those which are seldom raised but are nonetheless of the essence. This approach will logically lead us towards what might provide potential solutions.

CHAPTER I

CONFLICTS IN AFRICA

The events taking place in Africa, the words said, and the everyday actions of those responsible for the administrative and political management of the continent demonstrate to anyone who takes the trouble to look closely that the environment, in the broad sense of the term, gives no cause for hope to the vast majority of the governed at the dawn of the new millennium. Some forms of behaviour, despite optimistic political utterances, still give pause for thought and raise doubts over our real desire for improvement. Although a large number of its inhabitants may today act on their belief in a number of certainties, in a changing world that is less than ten years away from the third millennium, Africa is sunk in serious difficulties whose consequences threaten to mortgage the future of generations to come and hence pose a serious problem of conscience for everyone. However, Africans must search for the means of allowing their continent to exist in the concert of nations, by way of an original approach that reflects their particular circumstances. Turning one's back on the outside world is not an option. Africa has to find in its own spirit the best ways of attaining its goal and escaping from its misery. It will certainly not be easy to catch up with the leaders of the pack, but that need not be the intention: what would be the purpose of joining the leaders? The essential thing is to give hope back to the thousands of people who go on hoping, and

to the thousands of children who want to live better in order to rebuild their impaired environment. In order to do this, we believe that it will be necessary to go beyond complaints and recriminations and to convince ourselves that change depends on each individual and that it is in fact possible to turn the tide of events and transform the existing state of affairs. Because of the demands made by different peoples, and in the light of the new political order that has resulted, irremovable autocracies have seen their foundations shaken, if not destroyed. Africa has shared in this phenomenon, and has seen the birth of an obligation, born of popular demands, to liberalise political life. As elsewhere in the world, the continent has set out to build a new type of politics. Democracy thus seems to have arrived in Africa. But how is it to be managed? How is it understood among the people? Despite the inherent difficulties, is it now the way forward to a better future? These are questions for which an attempt must be made to provide some answers.

As the African historian Joseph Ki-Zerbo once said, we have to decide not to be what we are not. Thus, given all the conflicts which African countries are experiencing, it is right to ask ourselves whether Africa and its children are really put there in order to massacre and destroy each other, even if wars, as everywhere else in the world, have never been absent from the "spirit of humankind", as UNESCO has so well put it. The history of the continent is littered with them. Nowadays, in fact, many conflicts criss-cross the African continent, bringing extremely dangerous levels of turbulence to all its regions. In the north of Africa, the main feature that deserves mention is the atrocities and fratricidal struggles to which Algeria has been subjected for quite some years. Politics and religion are intermingled, without the slightest solution appearing on the

immediate horizon. The people themselves are thus taken hostage, and the number of innocent victims is growing daily. The consultation of the people through the many elections that have been held in the country in the name of modish democracy has nonetheless contributed nothing to improving the situation. In Senegal, in West Africa, an armed conflict has been devastating the south of the country, notably Casamance, for some years. It is spreading, and no satisfactory solution is in prospect. There too, there is more than one cause. Despite the many attempts at fraternal understanding, arms always win the day, and in the areas of conflict in Africa, as everywhere else, no regard is paid to the fate of the people who have no choice but to serve as cannon fodder. In West Africa, two countries have been watched by the entire continent with bated breath (and one still is), and have flooded neighbouring states with waves of refugees whose only chance of survival has rested in a mass exodus to supposed freedom. These are Sierra Leone and Liberia, two countries whose social configuration contributed to the problems that later arose. Genuine fratricidal wars have been fought there, and unfortunately still continue in Sierra Leone despite cautious hopes of a lull. There is no need to describe the horrors and the atrocities. Generations of children have been wiped out, and continue to be so throughout Africa, but this does not seem to be a major worry for the instigators and supporters of these conflicts. In Liberia, the elections that have taken place there have opened the way to the building of peace. The episode of Guinea-Bissau should not be forgotten among these wars. It too has seen a large portion of its population flee to other countries, notably Senegal. The most recent agreements reached may, we hope, lead to a definitive settlement. Rather

more in the centre of Africa, Rwanda and Burundi continue to be the object of attention. Hutus and Tutsis confront each other, leaving behind them thousands of people who have died in atrocious, indescribable circumstances, without counting all the displaced population groups. How and why has it been possible for such deep hatred to exist and to go on being perpetuated between two peoples who seem to have so much in common, notably language, that tool that creates such powerful links? Moving east, the Sudan, Chad, Ethiopia and Somalia have suffered or are still suffering numerous confrontations. Some countries, such as Somalia, have almost disappeared because there are no organised structures. The never-ending story of Zaïre had enjoyed relative peace until the seizure of power by the armed opposition. In the absence of serious communal debate on how the country is to be run politically, and of a quest for a national consensus, the earlier troubles have restarted and are multiplying throughout the region. Angola seems to be returning to where it started and to be in such a delicate situation that it could all flare up again if we are not careful, since despite the many agreements that have been signed, the arms are still there and continue to dictate what is law. The whole of Africa is thus experiencing today such a lack of stability that nothing can apparently be done to mitigate the situation. The countries not affected by these feuds nonetheless have hidden conflict situations. The elections held throughout the continent provide the evidence. The appeals to foreign observers and accusations of fraud and cheating that typify these operations constantly remind us of the existence of social explosions that are waiting to happen. Recently it was the turn of Congo-Brazzaville to experience such events. In a country with fewer than three million

inhabitants, two or even three opposing camps confronted one another, and each political leader was at the head of an armed militia with evocative titles such as the Cobras, the Ninjas or other yet sillier names¹ that indicated the low cultural level to which people who had nothing were subjected: sorry references that have turned Africa into a continent that is always willing to consume but is incapable of creating its own image that should reflect the courage and tenacity in labour of its peoples. Ninjas and Cobras are names that show up the cultural infantilism to which it is intended that people should become accustomed. But this is a devastating infantilism, a tragi-comic scenario directed and acted out by the politicians themselves.

African populations, however, aspire to quite different things, above all to peace. Through peace they would like to enter the third millennium in the hope of being able to live better in order to give future generations the chance to respond to the challenge of education and development. The immense riches concealed in the African sub-soil that excite the covetousness of those still dominating the continent from within and without by obscure and unacceptable means, provide the irrefutable proof that hope must be reborn and that prosperity is within the reach of Africans if all the political, social, economic and cultural obstacles are removed and if the effort is made to bring into the open, in order to extirpate them, the causes of all the troubles that are in fact tending to push Africa into the arms of its economic assailants.

¹ One of the militias is even called the Zulus. This, presumably, is a reference to the courage and historical military virtues of that people.

CHAPTER II

THE CAUSES OF THE CONFLICTS

2.1 Causes Associated with Communication

The various observations made in recent years in the political and social field have revealed strong similarity in the origins of conflicts. Although some causes are more prominent and perhaps immediately discernible, there are others that are less obvious but are no less pernicious and destructive. These are associated with the uses of language, which the very essence of language, that powerful tool of communication, does not at first show up. They are, however, the consequence of other extremely harmful effects. By causes associated with communication, we must therefore understand an absence of linguistic homogeneity due to the existence of the linguistic pluralism that is frequently found in Africa, the development of which is rudimentary and crude because of a lack of political will to iron out the difficulties arising therefrom in order to make it acceptable by means of positive thinking and viable, reliable scientific research. Wherever this plurality of languages manifests itself, whether in countries of the North or of the South, the issues that it raises are similar. They lead to an explosion of all kinds of contradictions, which are often glossed over for fear of a more generalised conflagration. The same attempted solutions, the same dilatoriness and the same *laissez-faire* can be observed everywhere. A few examples should

illustrate this state of affairs. In Algeria, for example, alongside the present serious social and political dissensions that the country is experiencing, the language question still persists. The old Kabyle question constantly resurfaces in urgent demands for linguistic recognition. It is today yet more pressing in the light of the recent decision by the Algerian state to impose Arabic on all population groups. It is the same situation that occurred in Nigeria some years ago. In the case of the war known as the "Biafran War" too, which brought its cohort of misery, destruction and widespread displacement of people to neighbouring countries, language questions explained the origins of the dissensions between the social groups in the country. While present-day conflicts are not as far-reaching as that war, they remain just as alive in that country. The region of Wari, in the south of Nigeria, was some months ago the scene of a bloody confrontation between two communities, the Ijaws and the Itsekis. Hidden behind such disputes is primarily a difference in language, which gives groups their identity. This is an inevitable cause of misunderstanding if certain political and cultural difficulties linked to this situation are not resolved. Not many kilometres from the vast territory of Nigeria lies Benin where, despite the calm and relative political stability that obtain there, the language question is still a major problem that will prove to be a time bomb unless there is the will to act to quash the disastrous consequences of linguistic differences. The north and south of the country both parade these at sensitive times such as during elections, since they are composed of different social groups whose languages are one of the essential factors of differentiation. We would surely not speak of different peoples and cultures on the planet if there were no multiplicity

of languages. What is peculiar to this phenomenon is the failure to recognise diversity as a genuine enrichment, since monoculturalism is necessarily not enriching. It is the absence of a real political will to overcome the terrible effects of linguistic difference and to use all available means to exorcise all the evil that it engenders for population groups and for countries. In order further to measure the significance of the linguistic element in the lives of the nations, it suffices to examine the results of adult education policies introduced some years ago in a number of African countries. If, given learners' reluctance, tangible results are to be achieved, it is almost impossible to carry out such work through a (local or international) foreign language at the grassroots. Otherwise all the efforts made might have no educational effect. There is therefore good reason to start from the media familiar to the groups concerned, that is, by way of the languages used in the local environment. This task is an enormous enterprise that is full of pitfalls if the choice of languages is imposed at national level because of financial and other shortages. It is precisely at this point that barriers are erected and numerous constraints placed on the progress of the operation. People insist on speaking their own language, however well they understand a vehicular language, in which they are sometimes fluent. Any introduction of a language other than one's own is considered an intrusion and even a decision to be treated with suspicion. The consequences can be imagined. Thus we all need to find adequate solutions. But considerable importance is to be attached to the way in which the issue is resolved because the stated goal will necessarily reveal the political honesty or dishonesty of the attempt. This would apply to the situation in Liberia. The country was born out of the arrival in large

numbers of freed Black slaves from the United States of America, who were expected to coexist with the people speaking local languages. From the beginnings of this movement of population, the country therefore carried within it the seeds of the present dissension, as has already been emphasised. They are thus both linguistic and political. But although the language issue is not the main cause, it has unquestionably played a major role. South Africa too, freed from the yoke of apartheid, has experienced similar difficulties between the Zulus and other social groups, although these are somewhat attenuated today, since the great political events that have taken place there. It is a long-standing conflict which this new country must resolve for good. In view of all this, the language issue can certainly be said to be one of the causes of the political and social problems and conflicts that arise in the world, and more particularly in Africa.

Because it is badly exploited politically, the presence of major vehicular languages does not diminish the harmful effects of the poor management of existing linguistic diversity, which "cannot be viewed merely as an obstacle to communication between the various groups; rather, it should be regarded as a source of enrichment..."², as the Delors Report maintains. This diversity, if handled badly, inevitably leads to exclusion as a result of patchy and irrelevant linguistic communication. It must be stressed, therefore, that the existence of such a situation does not automatically burden Africa with every evil and lead to a resurgence of bygone pessimism about Africa; few Africans still subscribe to such

² UNESCO, *Learning, The Treasure Within* (Delors Report), 1996, p. 46

sentiments because the situation is not peculiar to Africa but affects all the other regions of the world. The so-called developed world also experiences it in many places. One might have thought that with the emergence of intensive scientific activity and extraordinary technological development in recent years, and hence a relatively high standard of living, this part of the world would have been spared these troubles, which amount without doubt to a failure on the part of humanity. In the United States, the Latin American minorities, for example, constantly demand that their own language should be used. The determined desire to affirm Corsican identity in France is also based on the question of language. In every case, it is a major factor. In Belgium, too, difficulties and indeed disputes derive from linguistic questions. But what typifies the African situation is its peculiarity in terms of the consequences of the failure to recognise the problem, which is accentuated and inflamed by politicians and other arms dealers so that it persists. The whole of Africa is affected, both countries where wars are raging and those which give an appearance of calm and peace. As will be seen, the evils born of the exacerbation of linguistic differences affect all African countries. It has been said that language is the basis of the differentiation between social groups, since linguistic communication ceases to be relevant outside such groups, and each member derives his or her identity and, perhaps, *raison d'être* and sense of human worth from linguistic allegiance. Lack of knowledge of a particular language automatically leads to exclusion, and the virtual "guilty party", who is outside the group, is labelled a loathsome foreigner. He or she thus becomes, as Touati has

said, "someone's barbarian".³ It is also known that the wish to be recognised as a full member of a social group is in human nature and should not be denied to anyone. But this attitude becomes harmful when the intrinsic value and enrichment of multilingualism, which is a distinctive sign of a multiplicity of social groups, is not recognised or well handled. It thereby becomes a main cause of misunderstandings, of which the inevitable consequence is the creation of further conflict situations that this time are political. How could it be otherwise - although this is not meant as a hasty way of justifying our own failings - if Africa goes on suffering the after-effects of an iniquitous and shameful carve-up that defied logic and paid no regard to existing social groupings or their ability to live together in harmony? The predominant desire in that enterprise was to grab Africa's immense wealth. It is true that it is now difficult to manage this troublesome inheritance, which has resulted in some African states' harbouring heterogeneous language groups who have, despite the major handicap with which they started, nonetheless succeeded in most cases in living together. More than anywhere else, the consolidation of nation states will without a doubt remain a painful undertaking that is full of pitfalls since the number of languages spoken in many African states ranges from a dozen to more than 250 in some instances. It is therefore difficult to imagine how any political, economic and social organisation could be properly instituted by African states without a hitch. However, the situation is there; the evil is created, and we must necessarily accept it in order to escape from it in any way we can. What is said about the inability of Africans to unite is both

³ A. Touati, *Démocratie ou barbarie*, Desclée de Brouwer, p. 125

deceptive and obfuscating because it is a veil thrown over historical reality. If the desire for power and domination had not taken precedence over common sense, Africa would not be in its present state. Unlike the old colonising nations, the formation of African states must take all these factors into account. If the language spoken thus appears to be one of the direct sources of most conflicts, it also strongly influences other causes which are expressed largely in political terms.

2.2 Political Causes

Because no attempt has been made to deal with multilingualism and to make it an essential and positive factor in national life, which would have helped to strengthen the unity of all elements of society, this opportunity for rapprochement has been transformed into the political cause of conflicts. Exclusion then makes its appearance, with all its noxious effects of various types such as tribalism, xenophobia, regionalism, etc. These notions are real banes, encouraging behaviour that undermines and eats at the core of any lasting chance of cohabitation between peoples. Such behaviour, born of the bad management of linguistic and cultural differences, turns into the political cause of conflicts when it is deliberately manipulated and prosecuted for political ends, that is, when it is used as a means of political management and domination. It is certain, however, that it might not have existed if it had been possible to maintain the original harmony between the various social groups that have to live together, and if people's ambitions and desire for power had not prevailed. It is indeed a hard and pitiless struggle, sometimes fratricidal, to get to the front of the crowd of people pursuing high political office. In

order to have the slightest chance of getting "fixed up", therefore, people fall back on the group in the certainty of being identified as full members. Hence there is a frantic quest for political power bases that are essentially founded on the regions or social groupings. In this way, a "local boy" may succeed in gaining power, a "boy" in whom others recognise themselves and who must in return hand out kick-backs. While judicial institutions have achieved relative success in some regions of the world in limiting this practice, Africa retains it to a degree far beyond what might reasonably be expected. Some of the examples cited above give the full measure of the drama that is being played out, and it is a real drama. Hence, tribalism, regionalism and the other plagues that have been mentioned here and whose grievous consequence is exclusion, are among the major causes, together with issues relating to multilingualism, of the wars in Africa. This sheds some light on the report of the Interafrican Union of Human Rights, which states that "a certain approach, a caricature of affairs, reduces conflicts in Africa to 'tribal conflicts' and presents them as an inevitable fate that weighs on the accursed continent. This superficial approach, so pessimistic about Africa, obscures the real causes of conflicts in Africa and the true issues, and in consequence does not allow appropriate solutions to be sought."⁴ Whatever the force of the arguments for evading the question, tribalism, the basis of which is linguistic difference, must necessarily be accounted among the causes of conflicts in Africa. The causes should not be oversimplified, but these afflictions must be recognised as phenomena that can also lead

⁴ Interafrican Union of Human Rights, *Les droits de l'homme en Afrique: Histoire, réalités et perspectives, Rapport 1995-1996*, p. 181

to conflicts. In this context some emphasis should be given to the analysis made by traditional chiefs in West Africa during an exchange of views on the prevention and management of conflicts. Their analysis is all the more important because it brings together everything that we have sought to point out here. They also stress the role that can be played in society by the various levels of society that we, often wrongly, think are incapable of reacting with understanding to given political situations because they are nearly all illiterate. According to the traditional chiefs, the causes of conflicts could be set out as follows:

- "the artificial frontiers between African states that are comparable to the former Berlin wall because they divided families and blood brothers in Africa;
- the intolerance of some politicians who, in order to gain power, do not hesitate to produce conflicts by pitting regions or ethnic groups within a country one against the other;
- the concentration of state power, which prevents grassroots communities from managing their internal and external conflicts through their legitimate leaders, who are the traditional chiefs;
- the anarchic circulation of weapons of war, encouraged by arms dealers and the enemies of Africa, the cradle of humanity."⁵

⁵ Idem

Others may be added to these political causes. These are especially what might be called religious causes, given the nature of the confrontations. Although there are fortunately not many of these on the continent, those that do occur are still serious enough to merit mention. Blind religious fanaticism, of which intolerance is a grievous consequence, gives rise to these conflict situations. It should be noted that the notion of intolerance is not aimed at one religion in particular because they all carry the seeds of it within them if the precepts that they embody are not truly lived up to and translated into everyday actions. These religious causes may be linked also to the causes that might be described as cultural, given their influence on one another. The two concepts self-evidently overlap even though no conflict has ever been openly unleashed in Africa explicitly in the name of culture. Another equally important set of causes must be added to these, which determines the political behaviour to be observed in the origins of conflicts. These are what we may call economic causes which, more than all the others, are creating many wrongs on the continent. Everyone knows that Africa contains enormous wealth which, for the time being unfortunately, cannot be processed locally because there is a lack of suitable technical plant with which to do so. Exploitation is therefore left in the hands of organised groups whose rapacity and desire to despoil the continent as fast as possible leads them to create the complex situations within the states of which we are all aware. In addition to the exclusion that has been discussed earlier in this essay, the exploitation of wealth is in our view the fundamental cause of wars in Africa. It is both a political and an economic cause.

The purpose of going beyond a mere reductive analysis of conflicts has been to prepare the way for numerous solutions that may be envisaged in the search for lasting peace, since not to recognise certain facts means, in our view, a refusal to see where responsibility lies in unstable situations such as those experienced today, the consequences of which are disastrous for the entire continent.

2.3 The Consequences of the Conflicts

There are many consequences resulting from the conflict situations that have been created in various places throughout Africa. We shall mention some which we consider the most serious because they treat people as objects to be manipulated at any moment and cast aside at will. First of all, there is the large number of refugees, to which the continent has in fact seldom given much attention. An examination of the figures reported by international organisations reveals that almost five thousand Somalians, for example, have fled their country for others such as Ethiopia, Kenya or the Yemen.⁶ During the Liberian conflict, 150 thousand refugees settled in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire, not counting those who moved into Ghana and Nigeria.⁷ About 450 thousand Sierra Leoneans are today living in exile, divided between Liberia and other West African countries.⁸ All these data lead to the justified conclusion that

⁶ Information drawn from *The World*, UNHCR, 1998

⁷ *Idem*

⁸ *Idem*

the notion of "displaced persons" can be applied to quite a number of situations in Africa, which has unfortunately become the continent of vagabonds. This intermittent and unintended movement deprives women, men and children of their land and home states and strips them of their entire identity save for a number, which enables them to obtain their supposed daily pittance - unless war once more drives them on or finally engulfs them. The effects of such forced displacement, further consequences of conflicts, of course lead to famine among peasant farmers who are prevented from working in their fields to meet their own needs and those of their fellow citizens. The populations who are thus displaced wander on, their physical and moral well-being subject to unheard-of suffering. They become the living dead, beset by diseases of all kinds which are - and this is the worst misery - to be found on the distressing list of those that the world scientific community finds it difficult to eradicate because the causes are not really known and the resources are not available. Known diseases that had already vanished are indeed reappearing, and new ones are surfacing because of the degradation of the health environment. One corollary to all this is the disastrous situation in which children find themselves. "In many emergency situations," state Aguilar and Retamal, "more than 50% of the population are children and adolescents. The majority of these vulnerable groups have experienced trauma due to the outbreak of violence, the disruption of families and community structures, as well as lack of basic resources. This severely affects their physical and psychological

well-being."⁹ In refugee camps, families do indeed totally disintegrate. Despite the efforts of humanitarian organisations whose sacrifices are sometimes immense, some weak and deprived groups find themselves left to one side, and others, not necessarily better off but devoid of scruples, profit from the distress of the majority and regrettably contribute to degrading behaviour and the spread of drug abuse with all its harmful effects. It is not hard to imagine the outcome. The concept of family loses any sense. This is a sorry spectacle for Africa, but the protagonists and the backers of these filthy wars refuse to look it in the face.

Another consequence of these conflicts, just as terrible and intolerable, is the appearance of the new phenomenon of the enlistment of children in the ranks of combatants. Never before in the history of Africa has such a practice been known, because children have always had pride of place. War has been a matter for adults. Who then could have imagined for a moment that children would be deliberately drugged during these horrible conflicts without rules or codes of conduct and thrust into the streets in the course of so-called military operations to kill, thief and rape regardless of their age? For these urchins in search of heroism, war has become a macabre game, and a gun takes the place of the school desk that they would normally be using at that age to complete their learning. It is time to admit, as UNESCO has said, that "children are the innocent victims of adults' wars" and that the only education these pseudo-warriors receive is how to handle arms and how

⁹ P. Aguilar and G. Retamal, *Rapid Educational Response in Complex Emergencies: A Discussion Document*, UNESCO et al., 1996, p. 11-12.

to kill other people, without knowing what those people have done wrong, if anything. What has become of all the resolutions that have been voted on in the many international forums? The "Convention on the Rights of the Child", adopted in 1989, lays down clearly that "the education of the child must aim to prepare the child to take on the responsibilities of living in a free society, in a spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality between the genders and friendship between all peoples and ethnic, national and religious groups, and with persons of native origin...". This solemn declaration plainly shows, if any reminder were still necessary, the seriousness of such a militarisation of children, especially since many of those who subscribed to it are today guilty of encouraging the complete psychological disorientation of children and of spreading the culture of violence. In addition, another danger to children must be mentioned. This is anti-personnel mines, of which children are "the most unprotected victims..." as "their natural curiosity and love of play in open areas leaves them highly vulnerable to mines..." and "over 50% of mine victims die from the blast".¹⁰ Thus, as a result of these problem situations, violence has appeared and become established in many African countries. Having created an environment of distress, left a significant section of the population to fend for itself in deplorable physical and mental condition, and sent thousands of refugees fleeing to other states, almost all African countries are today faced with the presence of organised groups that are the products of the armed bands and militias created in various places on the continent. The absence of

¹⁰ P. Aguilar and G. Retamal, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

mobilisation a posteriori of the regular armies and the laxity of senior officers in the distribution of weapons of war are the cause. For the time being, no viable solution has been found to contain this phenomenon. In consequence, mob rule takes over, using methods that are not hard to imagine. This is yet another aspect of the social degradation that the continent is experiencing. The only way out would have been schools and education. But everything that might have fostered these has been destroyed.

Educational programmes for both children and adults have stopped. Research institutions and higher education, the undoubted breeding grounds for the scientific thinkers of today and tomorrow, are disappearing because the infrastructures that were so dearly acquired are being bombed and ransacked. Teaching staffs are fleeing or being killed, and there is no hope of their being replaced one day. Quite a number of countries fall into this dismal pattern, states which are now merely shadows of their former selves in all fields. Health services, or what remains of them, do very little to improve people's well-being. Those professionals who try to do so are in some places having their equipment stolen. All of this faces Africa with a void, a void in health, a void in education, and above all a void in science and research. When everything has thus been destroyed and all sections of society are on the road with no fixed points of reference or future objectives, the first and most important thing to be done is of course to rescue physically all these displaced persons and to attend to their health. Hence, what we might call "refugee societies" are growing up on the continent, with all the consequences that such a scourge may bring with it. Since we know that over the last two decades, Africa has had to pay back at full rate the

loans made by international financial institutions, and that illiteracy is today one of the greatest curses that is crucially holding back the development of African countries, we have to ask ourselves whether there is really any desire to escape from the mess. Is it lack of awareness and ignorance, or is it a concerted plan to let every aspect of the continent go under? Everyone must now have the right to ask such questions, given the game that is being played out, and the extent of the fighting that is intentionally carried into towns and villages. When reason thus deserts humankind, it is obvious that Africa will go on trying to find itself but with less success than others, while the potential and resources are there and only need to be helped and encouraged. While research is expanding elsewhere in the world in an attempt to resolve quickly and effectively the questions facing humanity at the threshold of the third millennium, African political leaders have deliberately chosen to put a stop to this trend and, yet more seriously, have chosen not to introduce training for human resources capable of helping, in association with those that exist elsewhere, to give people hope once more and to carry out major health, education and economic programmes that could help to check the many problems that plague us.

Over and above the violence that is eating into African societies, there is now reason to fear another effect of conflict situations, namely the appearance, if they are not already there, of groups used by traffickers of all kinds. This could lead to the creation of parallel powers that harm countries' normal political and economic organisation. Is it not time for African leaders and organised social and political organisations to be seriously worried about this? As Jean Ziegler has so rightly stated, in reference to organised crime, "a society which no

longer moves on its own initiative and whose harmony no longer obeys the will of the free individual, is a condemned society. No state, no law, no repressive force, however determined and severe, can protect it any longer."¹¹ Speaking of the danger that stalks us, he reports the words of the head of German counter-espionage, to whom "the danger to a state governed by the rule of law does not lie in the criminal act as such, but in the potential that organised crime has, because of its enormous financial power, to influence democratic decision-making processes over a long period. The most immediate and visible consequence of this situation is the rapid advance of corruption among politicians and other decision-makers in our society... By virtue of its gigantic financial power, organised crime is secretly gaining increasing influence over both our economic, social and political life, and our judicial system and public administration. It will one day be able to dictate its norms and values to our society... The independence of our judicial system, the credibility of politics, and confidence in the values and protecting power of the constitutional state will thus disappear. This loss of confidence is intended [by organised crime]... Finally we shall have a state that is infiltrated, subverted and perhaps even governed by organised crime. Corruption will then be considered an unavoidable phenomenon and will be generally accepted."¹² Such statements show us the seriousness of the question of conflicts

¹¹ Jean Ziegler, *Les seigneurs du crime, Les nouvelles mafias contre la démocratie*, Le Seuil, 1997, p. 21.

¹² Eckhardt Werthebach, quoted by J. Ziegler, op. cit., pp. 278-279.

and wars in Africa since, while a number of conventional consequences of such situations may arise, other yet more harmful consequences may come about and prevent any reconstruction. What, then, can be done to rebuild the future, to bring hope once more to thousands of refugees, and to give a new vision to all the children on the continent? This will not mean rebuilding from scratch. Despite the difficulties, one particular social environment seems to making itself felt in Africa: a new political order which is the focus of talk and action, even though for the moment it is only the refuge of the few. This is democracy, to which some political leaders decline to make reference, preferring, so they say, an African way of democratisation. But whatever the form chosen, there is today a need to change our ways of thinking and acting, our political habits so to speak. To achieve this, the greatest challenge facing us is education, education in the global sense of the term which will turn Africans into forward-looking women and men able to build the continent and institute a true culture of peace by giving opportunities to all social groups in each country to play a part in developing their respective nations. These concepts of peace and democracy will thus need to be presented not in an abstract manner but in the light of the conflicts that are the daily lot of Africa today, and taking account of the causes of the conflicts and of the political behaviour of the protagonists. Having sought to define and show the way to these concepts of democracy and peace, we shall ask ourselves about the scope of education and its capacity to help to overturn the present situation so that Africa finally enters into a cycle of effective development in the years to come, and so that beyond the

"extremes of criminality and cowardice", we may reach
"extremes of good".¹³

¹³Mykhailo Orest, quoted by Ariane Janoto, *L'autre Afrique*, No. 73, p. 17.

CHAPTER III

THE “MANY-SIDED COMPLEX” OF DEMOCRACY

Although democracy presupposes the institution of an environment of justice and well-being, and hence peace, it would in our view be incomprehensible to split the two concepts of peace and democracy because they are fundamentally linked. In this regard, UNESCO has underlined the individual and collective character of the culture of peace, which is founded on convictions, ethical principles and a state of mind. It is expressed in being, in action and in reaction. It is impossible to dissociate democracy from development, conditions that are a *sine qua non* for establishing a culture of peace instead of a culture of war. Similarly, "A culture of peace rests on values, attitudes, behaviours and ways of living which reinforce non-violence and respect for the basic freedoms and rights of each person. It is expressed in the proclamation and acceptance of the right of everyone to be different and the right to live in peace and security within one's community."¹⁴ These two declarations clearly show the intimate relationship between the concept of democracy and that of peace and at the same time demonstrate that the elements that constitute

¹⁴ UNESCO, "Towards a world culture of peace", Working Document drafted by the UNESCO Culture of Peace Programme (CPP), Second International Forum on a Culture of Peace, Manila, Philippines, November 1995.

democracy make it indispensable to the institution of peace. Democracy, it could therefore be said, is both internal and external to peace. Education for a culture of peace hence requires that one has a broad understanding of the concept of democracy so that this can be translated consistently into all the everyday actions that one takes. Through a certain number of elements that may be regarded as its constituent parts, the notion of democracy is thus seen to be both singular and many-sided. What are these elements? In terms of education, what do they cover? In order to answer these questions, it will be necessary to specify who are to be the recipients or beneficiaries of the education to be given, so that the quality and type of information to be conveyed can be defined.

The notion of democracy is made up, we believe, of a set of factors that we may define as a "many-sided complex". In our view, it means more than "liberty and justice for all, an economic system of private enterprise ...".¹⁵ Nor does it have a merely restrictive meaning such as "democracy combines freedom of criticism of authority with the right to organize in opposition to authority and to participate in the making of decisions for the whole community".¹⁶ Democracy should go much further. The following sub-divisions could therefore be suggested as a way of looking at the substance of the constituent elements:

¹⁵ P. Mayo (1960) quoted by Özlem Ünlühisarcikli et al., *Adult Education and Democratic Citizenship*, Institute of Pedagogy of Wrocław University, 1995, p. 67.

¹⁶ F. Bealey (1988) quoted by Özlem Ünlühisarcikli et al, *Adult Education and Democratic Citizenship*, Institute of Pedagogy of Wrocław University, 1995.

- Political democracy
- Economic democracy
- Social and cultural democracy

Moreover, the notion of democracy necessarily relates to that of development. But development should not be considered a component of the concept of democracy since it has the peculiarity that it can be defined in a variety of ways, as can democracy. There is an interdependence which will need to be examined in terms of their contribution to the building of peace.

3.1 Political Democracy

For various political, social and economic reasons, the concept of democracy arises in every discussion nowadays, both in countries in the North and in those in the South. The "political democracy" element thus seems to be frequently, if not always, associated with the relationship between the rulers and the ruled, the governors and the governed. It always refers to the citizen's quest to realise himself or herself without excessive outside constraints, and the desire to take part freely in improving one's social environment. To the notion of freedom could be added elements such as equal consideration for all social groups and equality between individuals. Thus, in the clarification of the notion of political democracy, the concept of freedom may refer to what it might be convenient to call "free expression" or more exactly, "democratic communication". While the act of communicating signifies establishing a relationship with another person, or simply conveying something to others, the epithet "democratic" that is associated

with the act reinforces the political will to make the communication relevant. If realised thus, it should lead at a political level to a true mutual understanding and hence to a sharing of responsibilities between all sections of society. Democratic communication, relevant communication that recognises the worth of all parties, must also give rise to greater participation in civic life and must promote effective understanding of political actions taken. It also confers on citizens the ability to oppose whatever appears to be contrary to justice and to undermine the individual's basic rights. In sum, it signifies "participation by citizens in an uninterrupted process of dialogue, discussion and agreement on the decisions that affect their lives". But if democratic communication is to be really relevant, it requires that the language issue, the basis for its full implementation, be adequately resolved. The medium used must be understood and accepted by everyone. That means that it will be necessary to take care of language development so that a literate environment is created that encourages the sharing of communication. We know that African countries, as a result of the political circumstances that we have already discussed in relation to the partition of the continent, are multilingual and hence often prove very difficult to manage in terms of their linguistic composition. Generally, however, as the Delors Report emphasises, linguistic diversity "cannot be viewed merely as an obstacle to communication between the various groups; rather, it should be regarded as a source of enrichment..."¹⁷ In short, "the coming of a culture of peace is to be seen in a sharing of the free circulation of information. Secrecy, restrictions on freedom of information

¹⁷ UNESCO, Delors Report, 1996, p. 46.

and expression, and the use of knowledge in the exclusive pursuit of profit and power are the marks of a culture in which the 'other' is perceived as a target for exploitation or as a potential enemy."¹⁸ That is the meaning that can tentatively be given to the notion of democratic communication, and the key to what holds up its implementation. If it is also to be meaningful, democratic communication must aim at a sharing of information, which is the fruit of productive collaboration between all levels of society through written communication. That means that if someone is unfortunately unable to read and write, then communication does not take place or is irrelevant. It is therefore not surprising that most problems encountered in Africa, where the majority of the population is illiterate, originate in this inability to grasp the complexity and the political, economic and social realities of the modern world. To appreciate this, one has only to look back at the many elections that have taken place in the various African states. In each country it is well known that dozens of political parties have been set up, frequently with a regional or even an ethnic base, and that their founders regrettably see themselves as real party leaders. People happily join and leave with no formalities, largely according to temporary advantage. Such coming and going has given rise to a fashionable neologism, "political transhumance". Faced with such a plethora of political formations, whose programmes are only programmes in name, illiterate sections of the population are called upon as part of democracy *à la mode* to choose political leaders through elections, the results of which are generally contested. A dangerous mechanism is used in these elections: pictures

¹⁸ UNESCO, Delors Report, 1996, p. 3.

become the signs by which people make their choices, and it is through them that communication takes place. Such communication is necessarily unproductive, given the results which it achieves. Manipulation and corruption immediately become the golden rules and the only means of gaining votes. Inevitably the end result is the resurgence of the ills of which we have mentioned the persistence in Africa, inflamed as they unfortunately are by unscrupulous politicians who care nothing for the widespread damage thereby caused. These ills are regionalism, ethnocentrism, tribalism and other attitudes that breed exclusion. They are born of a lack of communication or essentially of an absence of relevant, and hence democratic communication. And if there is one field in which this notion of communication must play an essential part, it is that of politics. In politics, people are at the heart of everything, through the exercise of both their intellectual and their human capacities. It is also the forum in which words, according to the role which they are made to play under a given set of circumstances, have the power to transform reality or to manipulate it at will. Communication will thus either be full and complete or will lack some vital element. In order to develop democracy, it will then be necessary to fight tooth and nail against the lack of information and training programmes for people in fields such as literacy that will enable them to acquire new skills. It is the absence of these that subjects men and women to scurrilous treatment by all those who think that they enjoy the essential weapon of mastery of the written environment and that they can better understand the political, economic and social problems that affect the whole of society, as "...there is no robust, living democracy without enlightened citizens who are aware of their responsibilities and are

educated to accept them, and to acquire and develop the knowledge necessary to behave democratically."¹⁹ As the participants in the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, held in Hamburg in 1997, rightly emphasised, "Literacy, conceived broadly as the basic knowledge and skills needed by all in a rapidly changing world, is a fundamental human right. In every society, literacy is a necessary skill in itself and one of the foundations of other life skills. There are millions, the majority of whom are women, who lack opportunities to learn or who have insufficient skills to be able to assert this right. The challenge is to enable them to do so."²⁰ But while recognising the prime importance of the written word for the vast majority, there is no intention of ignoring that of oral communication, which is still the main strength of those who are subject to exclusion. Since orality is still the principal method of communication for many population groups, it could have been productive if there were a true sharing, that is to say, a dialogue between equals. What is to be observed, distressingly, is that these people are forgotten and even despised, although they could honourably be invited to share in the essentials of a country's political life: the general guidelines, the programmes and above all, the misunderstandings that give rise to conflicts. It is not fortuitous that in the forum on peace held in Brazzaville during 1994, a class of people deemed to be important in African society,

¹⁹Timothée Ngakatou, *Femmes africaines et Démocratie*, UNESCO, Dakar, 1995, p. 9.

²⁰ UNESCO, Declaration of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, 1997, p. 4, § 11.

whom Africa has fortunately not yet rejected, and who assuredly possess a moral weight in all our countries, were finally remembered. These are the "wise men" who are always mentioned but are promptly kept out of any discussion because those involved do not want to see their own ambitions compromised. If treated thus, orality is equally shorn of some of its vitality and is only recognised, as in the case of the written word, among the privileged class in power and those who can claim to be on their way to joining them. In such circumstances, how can anyone set out to create and practise true communication and healthy democracy? The literate minority in the society will take control of communication by turning themselves into a dominant class whose behaviour gravely impairs the establishment of democracy, which is "primarily a contract or a set of contracts which, in accordance with the terms defined, bind together individual and collective actors... In a contract, the contracting parties exchange something and...an exchange can only be just on two conditions: that what is exchanged is equal, and that the exchangers are free."²¹ Unless an attempt is made to give the most deprived new skills and to involve the greatest number continually in decisions affecting the life of the nation, a political impasse will be created. The only alternative that will then come to mind will be to falsify the facts of society and to misrepresent the truth, because the absence of communication allows no one who is excluded to express an opinion on all those potentially destructive things which constantly threaten the harmony that interpersonal relationships, intermingling of

²¹ Jean Baechler, *Précis de la démocratie*, Calman-Lévy and UNESCO Publications, 1994, p. 66.

all kinds and common linguistic practices have succeeded in weaving at all levels of society, in spite of linguistic diversity and widely varying means of exchanging messages. Groups of the population are thus obliged to fall back on themselves, and people are cheated and led to believe that certain persons are the only ones to know the truth while the majority are of feeble intelligence. The democracy which all political parties claim that they aim to usher in and defend, in justice and solidarity, is thereby vitiated. It is therefore normal that communication as practised should become a tool of domination for those who govern our countries. It clearly seems that such a practice keeps people vulnerable and dependent. As Pierrette Koné suggests, "Democracy, although often considered an ideal, is above all a practice. It does not serve as a trap to catch the violence which affects it. It is something experienced by human communities... Democracy only makes complete sense if no human group, no individual is excluded from or deprived of the fundamental rights accorded to everyone."²² In this way, all the conflicts that break out everywhere do so without anyone's giving a thought to the fate of the men, women and children whose forced march into exile mortgages Africa's future every time that there is a flare-up. It is all as though some people did not deserve to be invited, before any major decision was taken, to be consulted openly in an attempt to exorcise the evil. Whatever feelings may be evoked by this analysis, in view of the dramatic situations with which we are daily faced in Africa, it is imperative that all the actions of the political players should

²² Pierrette Koné, "Femmes et démocratie, une pluralité d'approches", in *Femmes africaines et démocratie*, UNESCO, Dakar, 1995, p. 71.

be brought into the open in the search for democratic solutions to conflicts. Given such a social environment, political democracy should consist of the development and encouragement of anything that can promote dialogue, and of anything that can enable everyone to play an active part in building the nation and exercising his or her right to speak out. As Mintombu has rightly said, "...any political commitment, any position taken on a political cause, presupposes full preparation and thoroughgoing, radical questioning of our own behaviour in the light of the present socio-political situation. We need above all to evaluate our own culture and our personal values in order to reconcile moral life with political practice." As he states, "the political élite...will essentially have to work to reduce effectively all forms of natural or social inequality. And the more effective is this adjustment, this work of reduction and rapprochement, the more it will lead us to the very core of democratic practice: that which gives priority to the interests of the majority and the greatest number."²³ Satisfying the needs of the entire population will concern not just the majority but also the fringe groups that are generally left out.

Within the concept of equality, we must therefore include the related aspect of the condition of women, and particularly of equality between men and women. However, it is not this equality which interests us for the moment, important though it is, but that which relates to women's problems of survival. Besides poverty and illiteracy, which affect around four out of five women in Africa, women face two other major problems:

²³ M. Mintombu quoted by M.L. Hazoumê in *Plurilinguisme et communication démocratique*, Editions des Presses du JORB, 1995, p. 99.

the impossibility of escaping from a social hierarchy that spells disaster for their cultural development, and their condemnation, being the most exposed marginal group, to the status of pariahs amid the conflicts created and organised by men. So much has been said and written, and still is being said and written on this subject, especially by those who are the great protagonists of this cause, but despite the agitation and the position statements on all sides, the situation is at best hardly changing. We may then wonder whether here too there is not a commercial interest involved, so that the acquisition of a small amount of power works to the detriment of the women themselves: a good many of those who have been the spokespersons lapse into unnerving silence and a scandalous lack of concern in some countries when they do gain power. It is that much more important to deal with the issue because women's place and role in society continue to be beset by conflicts: "Equal opportunity in all aspects of education is essential to enable women of all ages to make their full contribution to society and to the resolution of the multiple problems confronting humanity. When women are caught in a situation of social isolation and lack of access to knowledge and information, they are alienated from decision-making processes within the family, community and society in general and have little control over their bodies and lives."²⁴ If a solution is to emerge that is appropriate to democracy, therefore, there needs to develop a real political will to go beyond words and good intentions. If this does not occur, then a civil society needs to grow up through which can be created

²⁴ UNESCO, Agenda for the Future of Adult Learning, Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, 1997, p. 20, § 28.

"...many independent foci of self-organization within society, through which people can work collectively to solve their own problems, which can act as channels of popular opinion and pressure upon government, and which can serve as a protection against its encroachments...".²⁵ This society must succeed in "setting power against power, if we wish to break out of the vicious circle".²⁶ Such a society may bring about forms of communication that will inevitably lead to the attainment of freedom and hence to true democracy.

Respecting the majority also means respecting the rights of minorities. Nonetheless, as the Delors Report notes, it is necessary to "prevent a poorly understood inter-cultural egalitarianism from leading to their being shut up in linguistic and cultural ghettos that turn into economic ghettos...". We therefore consider that this issue needs to be treated with care and circumspection so that we do not slide down a slope that could prejudice the very women we wish to protect and whose inalienable rights we wish to see honoured. It would in our view be politically more adroit to consider whether in some national or cultural contexts it might not be more sensible to approach the notion of "taking minorities into consideration" with caution since it might lead to an unfortunate exacerbation of the evils outlined here. Given the configuration of African societies, the important thing is not to set out to favour one group over another, whatever its social allegiance. And if we believe that equality between social groups is an essential

²⁵ David Beetham and Kevin Boyle, *Democracy, Questions and Answers*, UNESCO, 1995.

²⁶ Jean Baechler, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

feature of democracy, everything must be done to ensure that the unity of such groups is consistently encouraged, in contrast to the present political custom of making opposition between groups the basis for the political management of states, which only leads to conflicts. The consolidation of nations through the emergence of a balance between groups, even in heterogeneous entities, must become the prime aim of everyone, and especially of African politicians. That is what the Delors Report aims to remind us of by saying: "The democratic spirit, however, cannot be satisfied with a minimalist form of tolerance that consists merely of putting up with otherness. This attitude, though ostensibly simply neutral, is at the mercy of circumstances, which may undermine it when the economic or sociological situation at a particular moment makes the cohabitation of several cultures especially conflict-prone."²⁷ The question is so crucial today in Africa that what is called "regional balance" has become the rule and is even seen as a panacea for the political management of affairs. The composition of many government teams follows this principle, according to which each region is satisfied by being given an equal number of members to that of the other regions of the country. The same phenomenon is to be found in all areas of social life. Where such a procedure does not exist, one political or social group sometimes dominates another. This desire for "regionalisation" that is set up in opposition to what appears to be seizure of power and "absence of justice" seems to be a sufficient solution in some countries for the conflicts that might otherwise arise. But is it an effective democratic approach to resolving political issues that are both serious and delicate?

²⁷ UNESCO, Delors Report, 1996, p. 60.

Although the material satisfaction of each social group and individual appears to generate peace, a number of questions still deserve to be asked. In whose interest is such an approach chosen? While what has been called "relevant communication" may foster democracy, a system in which the citizen's participation in community affairs must be seen as a major step towards the consolidation of that community, we have to be clear that in the case of regionalisation and of domination by one or more groups, people are subjected to decisions that are hardly the outcome of open, honest consultation but result purely from the desire for domination. The least inclination to question or contest a decision becomes a brave and even suicidal undertaking for those who engage in it. The consequence that is most to be feared is then the resurgence of social conflicts of varying degrees of severity. The equity that is the original intention may prove to be a real source of conflict. This is confirmed in the final declaration of the Brazzaville forum, which states that "although the new governments continue to affirm national unity, the existence in one and the same territory of different ethnic entities, each demanding a legitimate share in the management of power, suggests that the state is a fragile institution. The principal manifestation of this is the difficulty in controlling ethnic rivalries, which are very often at the root of armed struggles."²⁸ Admittedly, ethnic entities are there for all to see, but they merely need to be handled in the surest way, which is by means of an atmosphere of mutual understanding. This has already allowed these same population groups, despite the

²⁸ UNESCO, Forum national pour la culture de la paix au Congo, 1994, p. 1.

drawback of colonial division, to live in harmony, albeit sometimes imperfect, but in any case better than their present situation. Regionalisation as we have described it above is thus not a viable solution to the problem, given the disastrous consequences to which it leads. The desire to introduce it as a system of political management is therefore, in our view, an error of political judgment since we believe that it merely breeds what Baechler has rightly termed "democratic corruption". But the situation in this field is so delicate in all African countries that there is an urgent need to find political solutions to this question of equality, solutions that are viable and acceptable to everyone in order to prevent its continuing to be a source of division and hatred. Anything that happens without a consensus between citizens or without seeking true justice and equitable sharing of power will unfortunately only be of benefit to a minority. This is so true that if one could assess this policy of regionalisation wherever it has been implemented, one would quickly realise that the results are very meagre and only lead to explosive situations. Do the regions, villages or other geographical entities from which political decision-makers originate experience real economic, social and cultural development? It is rare for this to happen in every case, and it can hardly be otherwise because the solution follows a different political logic. On the other hand, the concept of decentralisation, as certain states are currently attempting to put it into effect with the help of those who are already experimenting with making the regions true poles of development at all levels, might be an ideal solution if effective care is taken to ensure the harmonious development and blossoming of all social entities, and if the notion of equality and the recognition of identities become a reality.

Decentralisation thus conceived and organised would without doubt become the opposite of a system born of the desire to create political interest bases, which leads to conflicts.

3.2 Economic Democracy

In examining the question of democracy it seems necessary in our view to consider development also, since this is such a closely related concept. Between the two concepts there is indeed "an inextricable relationship, not of cause and effect, but of source and effect on the one hand, and of mutual conditioning on the other...".²⁹ Hence, even if the a priori suggestion that there is no development without democracy or democracy without development sounds like a truism, it is important to stress all the constituent elements of economic democracy since "a correct perception of democracy cannot but lead us to development. Democracy emphasises freedom, development emphasises the vital preconditions for this freedom which give rise to liberation thanks to a correct view of equality."³⁰ Economic democracy may therefore be understood as giving people the chance to organise their economic lives for themselves and as the way in which individuals participate in building the nation with a view to promoting development. It might also mean the promotion of endogenous development in order to mitigate the diminution of human value that derives from the present almost total

²⁹ H. Aguessy, *Séminaire sur "Démocratie et Analphabétisme au Bénin"*, *Rapport final*, December 1992, p. 3.

³⁰ H. Aguessy, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

absence of worthwhile work, as this has always been understood, in all continents, and more particularly in African countries. The only conclusion to be drawn is that "if development is not endogenous," as UNESCO emphasises, "it is in danger of running counter to and even overturning the traditional economic and cultural context of everyday life." Democracy thus presupposes a re-invention of the concept of work in a context of mutual dialogue so that everyone can find new value in his or her immediate life and can play a part in development through self-realisation in everyday tasks. Hence, the notion of development, as we have perceived it as part of democracy, tends to miss out one category of countries, those which are said to be evolving towards development or are regarded geographically as "developing countries". In the light of the growing number of unemployed persons, the vertiginous growth in poverty and the resurgence of illiteracy even in so-called "developed" countries, it is wrong to pick out a single target group of countries because of the close link between the two concepts of democracy and development. Under-development, as Aguessy points out, "which is our present state of development, does not mean absence of development. Rather, it means a dual development in which an endogenous mode of development is matched by an exogenous mode of development which crushes the endogenous without ever being able to replace it. There is a process of continual stratification of the exogenous and the endogenous. Such is the situation in every African country where there is dual, distorted and unfocused development."³¹ It is therefore really only a problem of organisation and choice of development

³¹ H. Aguessy, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

policy. Economic democracy linked to development can thus definitively be understood overall as the opportunity for everyone to play a part in creating conditions that favour the general good, and as the political will, among those who are in positions of authority, to share out equitably the goods produced by all members of a society. If development is not heading in this direction, "it is in danger of perpetuating injustices, leading to violent conflicts". And "if it is not sustainable, it is in danger of damaging and even destroying the existing environment and social structures" (UNESCO, 1995). But while economic democracy aims at real development, this will not be purely economic. It must aim at human development, which is a broader concept and concerns all human dimensions. It should include "access to knowledge, health, a clean physical environment, preservation of cultural heritage, shared community life, democratic freedoms..."³²

Human development is thus "a process of enlarging people's choices. In principle, these choices can be infinite and can change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living."³³ It can thus be observed that economic democracy seems to embrace the meaning of democracy as a whole and is, so to speak, one of the most important elements since it brings together political

³² UNESCO, Interparliamentary Conference on Education, Science, Culture and Communication on the Eve of the 21st Century, Final Document, 1996.

³³ UNDP, quoted in UNESCO, Delors Report, 1996, p. 79.

democracy and the social and cultural element. It also refers, given what is said about all the elements that make up human development, to the struggle against poverty, which is the prime objective of democracy.

3.3 Social and Cultural Democracy

The distinction drawn again here between social and cultural democracy on the one hand, and peace on the other, might appear surprising because they are as closely linked as the concepts of democracy and peace. Although these distinctions may result in the mention of a few redundant points, given the reciprocal influence of the two notions on each other, we shall nevertheless try to demonstrate the particularities of each of them, and of what each is composed.

First of all, the right to education is an inalienable right, especially for the most disadvantaged sections of society, notably women because it is, as the Hamburg Declaration says, "an indispensable prerequisite for fulfilling the other conditions for a culture of peace." But creating the necessary equity in the distribution of education calls for certain conditions to be fulfilled, including the effective resolution of the problem of illiteracy through the issue of linguistic communication. The right to education also means, in effect, the development of the media of communication, that is, of languages; and this must eventually lead to a progressive creation of a literate environment, which opens the way to the eradication of illiteracy. The adequate acquisition of knowledge in all fields depends on this.

There is also the right to be different, which calls for a spirit of tolerance, through which it should logically be possible to

resolve the conflicts linked to the social ills which we have discussed above: racism, tribalism, xenophobia, in short, all forms of exclusion. At this level, the recognition of cultural diversity becomes a necessity. This is one of the principles on which UNESCO bases its activities, namely "non-violence and respect for human rights; inter-cultural understanding; tolerance and solidarity; the sharing and free circulation of information; participation and complete empowerment for women."

Social and cultural democracy also means people's right to live a decent life, which presupposes the struggle against poverty with a view to alleviating it. Even though at this level, the notion may be linked to the concept of development, it becomes a social issue when it refers to peace since any situation of poverty may give rise to conflicts and violence. The eradication of poverty presupposes that whatever underlies it can also be eliminated. The struggle is thus a cultural struggle in the sense that it is necessary to overcome customs and even taboos; and it is economic because it must give citizens the necessary means of survival and the intellectual abilities to take part in the development process. The many conflicts which flare up throughout the length and breadth of Africa with their cohort of disastrous consequences call for the necessary action.

An equally important element of social and cultural democracy is the right to health protection and a healthy environment since promoting democracy at national level also means helping people to have access to health protection and to live in a viable, healthy environment. Nowadays, the environmental question is a crucial issue for humanity, especially since the struggle for survival, the rural exodus and the structural collapse of urban centres in Africa are seriously

prejudicing the physical heritage. But while shortages are the cause of much of the obvious damage, the destructive behaviour of some multinationals in this arena should not be passed over in silence. Are they unaware, or is there purely and simply a deliberate goal of exploitation? Destroying one thing in order to achieve another is, objectively speaking, illogical, and democracy suffers as a result. Whatever the cost, it must be eradicated. The right to a healthy environment is clearly a social issue but, because of its manifold consequences for humanity, it must also be included in the concept of human development, political democracy and economic democracy. As can be observed, cultural and social democracy seem to have no frontier even though they have their particularities, as we have suggested.

Thus, if we accept that development is based on democracy, we feel it necessary to clarify all aspects of this relationship. In other words, the question is how, for example, participation in development, the right of association, the right to education, the recognition of all cultures, the right to a healthy environment, the right to health protection, etc., really derive from democracy and could not be promoted without it. It is well known that any democratic system rests essentially on dialogue and consensus. This presupposes that any decision affecting citizens' lives and well-being must be widely wanted and accepted, as the following statements confirm:

S "Democracy aims to treat all people equally (...).The principle of equality requires not only that people's interests should be attended to equally by government policy but also that their views should count equally."

- S "The more say people have in the direction of policy, the more likely it is to reflect their concerns and aspirations."
- S "Democracy relies upon debate, persuasion and compromise."
- S "Democracy guarantees basic freedoms."
- "Democracy allows for societal renewal."³⁴

All these arguments clearly show the closeness of the links between the notions discussed above and that of democracy. The promotion of all the rights just mentioned as elements of the concept can only be achieved in dialogue and an environment of freedom. By way of example, cultural development needs the citizen to be able to appreciate the value of his or her culture, or to call it into question. Only a democratic situation can make this possible. Taken purely in its abstract form, the notion of democracy would not cover all aspects of adult education or account for its breadth. A detailed examination of the various constituent elements has allowed us to bring to the fore all the facets that result from the close relationship between the notion of democracy and those of development, economic development and human development. It has enabled us to assess the links between democracy and the culture of peace, so that we have been able to show that the concept of a culture of peace does derive from the notion of democracy, of which it is a basic element. When democracy becomes effective, it allows peace to come about.

³⁴ David Beetham and Kevin Boyle, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13.

Democracy is thus the essential channel for the achievement of peace.

We have thus attempted to show the full import of the two basic notions: democracy and peace. But we shall also have to indicate how these two concepts, both apparently essentially abstract and whose realisation depends on an ideal, could in the more concrete realm of education, influence citizens' everyday lives so that they become the promoters and guarantors of democracy and peace. Following on from the above questioning of the concepts, we shall wish to discover what may be covered by the diad of "adult education and democracy" in terms of the various contents of the elements we have identified. Obviously, neither democracy nor the aspiration to peace can exist without the conscious, willing support of the citizen. That means that the citizen's involvement in building a democratic society must necessarily draw on a deep understanding of the concepts and all that they imply: hence the importance of the information to be given and the education to be provided. But the implementation of education immediately raises a number of major questions that may be formulated as follows: Who should be educated? And how?

CHAPTER IV

ADULT EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY AND PEACE

From the breakdown of the various elements that have emerged from the concepts, it seems clear that education cannot be conceived from one standpoint alone, but needs the support and participation of the whole population. It may not be a requirement for some social classes while the remaining section of society - the people who appear to have everything, and already to have understood everything and grasped all there is to learn - are exempted. In a word, education for democracy and the institution of peace must not only be targeted at the deprived and the illiterate, whose needs might seem to call for such an approach. The events that are taking place today in the world, and particularly in Africa (wars, infringements of human rights, persistence of conflicts based on prejudice, racism, promulgation of laws reinforcing exclusion, etc.) clearly show the silliness of such an attitude since there is plenty of evidence that these evils do not arise out of the political will of the less affluent, who are invariably their victims. Education for democracy and the culture of peace must involve the whole of society and cannot be the preserve of certain needy target groups. If it were, the understanding of these concepts and their implementation through real action on the ground would not be the result of shared knowledge and a consensus established between all members of society, but would rather be the arbitrary imposition of certain rules of

conduct on one section of society. That would make such education unreliable and unconstructive. As the Delors Report puts it so well, the mission of education "is to enable each of us, without exception, to develop all our talents to the full and to realize our creative potential, including responsibility for our own lives and achievement of our personal aims."³⁵ And, "The cohesion of any society is predicated on shared activities and purposes, but also on shared values, which represent different aspects of the desire to live together."³⁶ This confirms the primacy of society over the individual in the field of education, which is "a complex process which works at many levels and is linked to learning through collective action," as it is expressed elsewhere in the same Report. But while education must take place within state frameworks, it is also relevant at national level between nations. They have to learn to live in harmony, in mutual respect, since "the consolidation of peace concerns all countries, whatever their levels of development." Thus, while we now know at whom education programmes should be targeted, the essential question is what this education should consist of. What form should it take? What should be its educational aims? To establish this, we shall have to examine the constituent elements one by one in order to determine the true educational needs of the various groups.

³⁵ UNESCO, Delors Report, 1996, p. 19.

³⁶ UNESCO, Delors Report, 1996, p. 53.

4.1 At the Political Level

The basic elements that emerged from the political democracy aspect analysed above were: freedom, equal consideration for all social groups, and an enlightened view on the question of minorities. The purpose of these should be an appropriate resolution of the question of equality between all citizens. In order to achieve this aim, the information to be conveyed will involve, besides the mass of the population, the decision-makers and all those who in one way or another influence political affairs, namely the civil society, on which the social and political organisation of most countries nowadays places an incontestable burden, even though it is still in its infancy in Africa. First, the information or education might consist of raising the awareness of those with responsibility so that they have the real political will to set out on the path of establishing a democratic environment that is favourable to the promotion of peace. Conflicts and lack of understanding derive, in our view, more from the refusal to create conditions favourable to peace than to ignorance of the basic rules of democracy.

As can be seen, sensitisation and education are therefore not merely the concern of the most deprived sections of society. Although their needs appear vast, education for democracy and the culture of peace cannot be a one-way street. It has to provide everyone with an understanding of his or her rights and obligations. For some, this will mean the obligation to accept the creation of an entire framework for the establishment of a viable democratic climate, and hence of opportunities for the free expression of opinions. This means that communication tools such as the media must also be developed and aimed at all groups of society. How often do we

see illiterates, who are supposedly unaware of political issues, appearing on television screens in Africa to discuss political or economic problems? How often are they invited to take part in debates on the political programmes of this or that political party? That is where the issue lies today, and democracy will only be able to develop at the price of changing the situation in a positive direction, by establishing justice and equity. In this case it is obvious, therefore, that the role of the media is to promote information and education so that "the enlightened participation by the people in the affairs of the state and the functioning of society" succeeds in influencing all the democratic structures that are to be, or already have been, put in place. To spell it out, this will be the guarantee of the development of democracy because true communication will necessarily emerge, communication that is itself democratic and respects others' values and is the prelude to the establishment of a fruitful dialogue and mutual understanding between citizens. The responsibility of those who are charged with bringing such a project about lies with the political decision-makers and the whole civil society who must, in our view, educate themselves in this direction by seeking to understand the effectiveness of such dialogue and participation. From observations of the constantly changing political situations and actions in Africa, it appears proven that in the absence of a dialogue between the various sections of society, and of an attempt to establish true democratic communication and to contain ethnic and regionalist conflicts, in short, in the absence of any attempt to set up the essential structures of consultation, or if these are ignored where they do exist, the "stirrers-up" of trouble and conflict will have the chance to profit from such failings.

As for the information and education intended for the other sections of society, those who are always thought to have the greatest need of learning, both decision-makers and target groups should decide on what shape they take. Technical means will therefore have to be created to this end which make it possible to establish a dialogue and to deal resolutely with the eradication of illiteracy, which is itself indispensable if we are to reduce cultural and political exclusion. It is indeed more than indispensable, with the sustained collaboration of those concerned, to overcome this handicap so as to promote the right of illiterate people to be able to decode the written environment in order to inform themselves and participate more strongly. As Aguessy states, "What does it matter if people are free to put a voting slip in the box...if they are still under-informed and unqualified to react?"³⁷ This desire to create opportunities for freedom and dialogue is without a doubt in the interests of justice, and although in this case justice does not have a moral connotation, we shall specifically include it among the sub-components of the concept of democracy. Justice refers here to the "equal consideration for all groups in society" and the "recognition of differences". In fact, when as a result of the organisation of appropriate means of communication and the effective affirmation of the political will to eradicate illiteracy, dialogue between citizens is created, they can decode everything that had earlier appeared to be out of reach of their understanding, and this will in fact be a form of justice that expresses in real terms the concept of "equal consideration for all". When dialogue is implemented through people's own languages, this is equally an example of justice.

³⁷ H. Aguessy, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Moreover, as Balibar suggests, "written communication is a factor of which all individuals henceforth become aware, and... a power to which everyone henceforth wants to have access."³⁸

The concepts of democracy and peace are thus realised through the nature of the relationship between the various elements in society. This relationship must be based on mutual understanding and sharing, an understanding that is neither pity nor compassion for the deprived, but which emanates from a real political desire to pursue change through the recognition of the rights of every citizen. As for the notion of sharing, this derives from the idea that information and education must be part of a constant exchange of ideas and of a mutual satisfaction of educational needs. This inevitably means interaction, so to say, the direct consequence of which is effectively that the rights and obligations of all protagonists are accounted for. The notion of sharing which we have introduced here means precisely that. Peace is thus not an abstract concept but rests firmly on the capacity of each citizen consciously to recognise, and convince himself or herself of, the existence of the "other" through the rights that are his or her own (the right to speak out, the right of civic participation, the right to work, the eradication of inequalities, especially between men and women, etc.). Any conflict situation derives, in our view, from the absence of this consensual environment, regardless of the political arguments in which the frictions that arise are often clothed as a means of explaining them away. Not to want to set out on this road by transforming oneself politically is to deny one's own capacity to make democracy a reality that can be experienced every day. This leads us once

³⁸ R. Balibar, *Le Colinguisme*, PUF Que sais-je, 1993, p. 19.

again to maintain, even though it seems a truism, that there can be no peace without democracy and no democracy without peace. In the interest of a culture of peace, this intrinsic relationship calls for the institution of education for democracy in all fields. As Johan Galtung states, "To understand peace and violence, we need to consider basic human needs - for survival we have to take into account all basic human needs - needs for survival, well-being, freedom and identity."³⁹ And, as he says, "development aims to promote those needs: violence insults them: peace preserves them."⁴⁰ Hence, it seems clear to us that before education for peace can be a bulwark against all forms of war and violence, it calls for a struggle for development, which can only be realised by way of a democratic situation, the lack of which is the direct cause of the absence of peace. Everything is thus connected and intertwined.

This is therefore what might form the basis of education for adults at the political level. It is closely linked to the question of economic education, in which we shall try to show how people need to take part in national development and hence in the building of democracy.

³⁹ J. Galtung, Interview in *UNESCO Courier*, January 1997, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

4.2 An Outline of Education for Economic Democracy

Development, as we have seen, is whatever benefits the individual by transforming the quality of his or her immediate environment, and the primary aim of this transformation is to improve his or her economic well-being within a reasonable time, or simply his or her human well-being. The process must namely "first and foremost make room for an awakening of the potential of the beings who are both its initial protagonists and its ultimate targets: human beings - and not only those who live today but also those who live on earth tomorrow."⁴¹ For this reason, it is for the decision-makers, and anyone else who is willing to take on this task in society, to encourage the development of each individual's personal aptitudes by establishing lifelong education, with the involvement of the latter, and based on the eradication of illiteracy and the development of new skills "by integrating literacy and other forms of learning and basic skills into all appropriate development projects, particularly those related to health and the environment, and by encouraging grass-roots organizations and social movements to promote their own learning education and development initiatives."⁴² It is thus vital that adults should adapt to new fields of knowledge and skills. Given the "globalisation" to which every nation is subjected today, adults must, together with their fellow citizens and in unity of action, have the technical and intellectual means to be able to face the

⁴¹ F. Mayor, quoted in Delors Report, op. cit, pp. 80-81.

⁴² UNESCO, Declaration of the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, 1997.

new challenges which the new political and economic order is bringing about. They must be able, in participating in public affairs, to put across their views on the better management of economic life. We believe that decision-makers must, together with the whole civil society, decide on the best ways of achieving these objectives. Such action will open the way to the true development of democracy, which is the corner stone of development. And if people are to organise their economic lives, to put across their own views while seeking to reconcile them with those of others, they need real freedom, freedom of action, commercial freedom, and the right to take joint decisions. While these are the rights of citizens and the obligations of decision-makers towards them, development requires yet more rights and obligations, failure to observe which can prevent the intended development from taking place. This is a frequent occurrence in all corners of the world today. Citizens, decision-makers and the civil society all have the right and the obligation, in the relevant fields, to demand of themselves and of others that public affairs be conducted in an unequivocal and transparent manner. Democracy reaches its full meaning when anyone, in accordance with his or her own understanding, acquires the freedom and the power to check and demand accounts. Any infringement of this freedom denies democracy and deprives it of a vital element.

The various elements associated with development could be set out as above, and hence also those of education for economic democracy, by way of which the development in question can occur. It will not do so if citizens do not have sufficient means of giving purpose to their lives, and if decision-makers fail to set up, in collaboration with the whole

of society, efficient institutions for the elimination of all factors causing poverty.

4.3 Education for Social and Cultural Democracy

The social and cultural aspect of education embraces some of the categories of political education already discussed, given the similarity in much of the content. If we take into consideration the various evils that we have mentioned, and their consequences, it goes without saying that adults must become involved in education leading to the acceptance of differences. The need for their involvement is all the greater, since certain sections of society that are thought better informed and better educated have a major responsibility for exacerbating numerous causes of conflicts. A similar movement should facilitate communication in order to make it more democratic. Moreover, social issues necessarily include health, since it concerns all human dimensions. Adults must, through the provision of greater information, be given the opportunity and the freedom to take an interest in improving their own health within a healthy environment. Many current diseases are the tragic consequence of the extreme degradation of our own living environments and our behaviour. A sharing of responsibilities and a constant interchange between the minority and the majority through the recognition of everyone's rights and obligations in order to establish preventative measures to counteract disease must be the basis of education for social democracy.

As regards the cultural element, this chiefly concerns the recognition of the values of national culture(s). Regardless of the way in which we have split up the concept of democracy,

it is obvious that it is always identical with the whole issue of culture. Thus, the promotion and development of culture are an obligation because culture is one with democracy. Adults must have the means to take charge of their own culture since if there is one important element in the creation of a democratic system, it is culture, the particularities of which give democracy more substance and relevance. As Stavenhagen states, "A truly multicultural education will be one that can address simultaneously the global and national integration, and the specific needs of particular culturally distinct communities, both in rural and urban settings. It will lead to an awareness of diversity and to respect for others, whether those others are my next-door neighbours, workers in the field, or my fellow human beings in a faraway country."⁴³ Thus, the recognition and acceptance of others, and the eradication of prejudices and all behaviours that diminish others, can only come about by going back to the source of culture. This requires that every citizen must become imbued with the culture of the "other" as well as with his or her own. But for this to have true value, it must be done in freedom within a true democracy. "Cultural freedom, unlike individual freedom, is a collective freedom. It refers to the right of a group of people to follow a way of life of its choice. Cultural freedom guarantees freedom as a whole. It protects not only the group but also the rights of every individual within it."⁴⁴ As in the case of any

⁴³ R. Stavenhagen, "Education for a multicultural world", in UNESCO, *Delors Report*, p. 231.

⁴⁴ UNESCO, *Our Cultural Diversity*, report of the World Commission on Culture and Development, 1996, p. 15.

freedom, adults must learn to discover and internalise cultural freedom in order to understand the necessity and importance of fostering it during their adult lives.

The question of the environment also relates to cultural development. Because of the influence that they exercise on human behaviour, and of the interchange between nature and human beings, culture and environment are inextricably linked, so that they are elements that inevitably run into one another. The way in which nature is perceived and experienced necessarily determines the way in which the individual experiences his or her culture. It can thus be suggested that culture is born of the interpretation of one's own environment. This is confirmed by the fact that "environmental education that does not take into account the relationship between humanity and nature on the one hand, and human well-being on the other, will find it difficult to achieve its objective..."⁴⁵ Until now, as UNESCO stresses, "the relations between the human species and the natural environment have largely been considered from a biophysical point of view; but there is increasing awareness that societies, from time immemorial, have sought the means to protect and to manage their resources. The means which people have adopted have been inspired by cultural values, of which we have to take note if we wish sustainable and equitable human development to become a reality."⁴⁶ There are thus values to be preserved here. Not

⁴⁵ B. Bessita, "Contribution de l'Eglise catholique à l'éducation environnementale au Tchad", Actes des journées de réflexion sur l'éducation environnementale come moyen de lutte contre la désertification au Tchad, N'Djamena, August 1996, p. 111.

⁴⁶ UNESCO, Delors Report, 1996, p. 18.

only are they being eroded for obvious economic reasons, but also as a result of the senseless and useless conflicts that we inflict on each other and which tend to ruin the little that remains in nature for our own protection against natural calamities such as desertification. As everyone must surely realise, the thousands of bodies buried in shallow graves or thrown into water courses in Africa can only lead to diseases that will be difficult to control in the near future. That is why information and education with a view to preserving the environment must involve all people without restriction, especially the politicians who are, when all is said and done, the main organisers and instigators of the widespread damage resulting from wars and the effects of wars. It will be necessary for all structured groups, whether political or not, to mobilise to oppose those whose vandalism has finally ruined most African forests while public opinion in many countries is fighting to protect them. Once again, mutual exchanges and learning from one another are indispensable in this case. But however important it may appear, the cultural aspect would not be complete without inclusion of the language question. Although this has already been considered at the political level, it also belongs here because it consolidates knowledge of people's own rights and obligations. Language, as is well known, is an important feature that defines and shapes the life of a nation. It is also the element that governs political, economic and cultural life. Hence it enables culture to be externalised so that it can be understood by others and the artificial barriers of prejudice can be broken down.

By way of a conclusion to this section, we have to bear in mind that the term education, insofar as it relates to the question of culture, must not be understood as the learning of

one's own culture or way of life. Adults can in fact not be taught how to discover and experience their culture. They are immersed in it from day to day. The essential task which they have is to internalise it effectively via an acute awareness of its importance in relation to their own lives and to the cultures of others. The systematic preservation of historic sites and of important remains, for example, should be supported; the recognition of the cultural value of the arts, without exception, must form part of any development programme so that material and human resources are genuinely allocated and adults are better able to see their importance while remaining, as we have said, the repositories of all these cultural forms.

Thus, information and education cannot bear fruit unless adults find themselves in an environment which encourages relevant communication and is a reflection of a democratic situation that fosters integral development. No education programme, however perfect, can be viable unless it speaks to what makes a person into an individual, that is, freedom. We can thus say that political, economic and social matters cannot be effectively managed in a society unless democracy is at the heart of their realisation - full-blooded democracy, which is more than a mere alibi for the amassing and exercising of personal power. What is wanted is a system in which society finds its full self. But we also know that this cannot come about without struggle and pressure. The role of civil society is therefore important and is, as Mintombu says, "to work effectively to reduce all forms of natural or social inequality. And the more effective is this adjustment, this work of reduction and rapprochement, the more it will lead us to the

very core of democratic practice: that which gives priority to the interests of the majority and the greatest number."⁴⁷

⁴⁷ M. Mintombu, quoted by M.L. Hazoumê, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

CONCLUSION

At the conclusion of this discussion, we feel it is clear that the challenges facing Africa are both many and great at the dawn of a new century which should bring new hopes. What Africa has to contend with today seems, however, to undermine any certainty that it will succeed in raising itself to an acceptable level of development. It is thus easy to doubt Africa's ability to take on and destroy the ills afflicting it so that future generations can find their place there, but this leads to a pessimism about Africa that we need to put out of our minds. Gone are the days when autocrats and abject dictatorships were legion on the continent. Once again, however, it finds itself plunged into no less dismal situations at a time when, paradoxically, the concept of democracy is becoming the leitmotiv and panacea for all political, economic and social ills. It is a time when efforts are being made to create the conditions that will allow strong, structured civil societies to emerge and when political parties are mushrooming (the image is not too strong since in some African countries there are over a hundred political parties for five million inhabitants), when consensus is becoming a rarity, and when tolerance and respect for others are ridiculed daily and gratuitous killings and genocides, which Africa has never experienced to such a degree, are spreading. The African continent has certainly faced conflicts and wars like every other continent; it has known of cases of difficult cohabitation between social groups; but what is happening today under our noses defies imagination and is intolerable. It is therefore all too easy to point to the bankruptcy of the new generations of politicians to whom excessive political ambition is the key to running the affairs of

state. We could also point to a political immaturity which empties the concept of democracy of real content. We could point to a lack of nationalism, which leads very easily to acceptance of manipulation. We could exclude none of these causes as they are all plausible in our eyes. Given all this, the basic requirement is a serious, considered quest to establish democracy in our societies in the context of parameters such as illiteracy, the local culture, the level of development of each country, etc. Such an effort would do away with the desire to take political actions that could generate conflicts. The sequels to all these delinquencies will unfortunately only disappear very slowly if the effort is not made at once to rethink education in its entirety. Its objectives must be to repair what has been deliberately broken on the continent. It must give children whose innocence has been violated the hope of once more being children like those elsewhere. And although this may sound like a cry of revolt on our part, it is really a cry of hope: the hope of seeing us become aware in Africa of the evils that are undermining us and preventing us from facing the major challenges of the coming century. Individual and collective discussion has been going on for a long time on other continents in the hunt for solutions to all the questions that human beings now face about their lives, their education and their global future at the dawn of the new millennium. During this time, African peoples have been pushed into massacring each other and becoming vagabonds. The cry of hope is also that of seeing all political actors on the continent take an active part in implementing actions that will lead towards our own emancipation and the renaissance which is now spoken of on the continent. Finally, this cry of hope is that of seeing Africans recognise and shoulder their responsibilities effectively in

order to lead our people towards an era of tolerance, respect for others and active participation in public affairs. Conflicts have never helped to build schools; they have never served to train human resources capable of promoting research, of helping to eradicate the numerous diseases that threaten people in their everyday lives; in a word, they have never created and fostered development. They produce what everyone can now observe with bitterness and shame: misery, exile, and famine on all sides, which are often used as a means of exerting political pressure. Education for democracy and a culture of peace must go beyond words and help all levels of society to become truly aware. This awareness should give the concept of education a totally new vision which will not, in Viviane Forrester's words, be a "worn-out gadget" but will, as she says, be lifelong education.⁴⁸

In the next few years another challenge will be to give urgent attention to the children and young people whom the warlords have distracted from their natural destiny through a culture of violence, the ferocity of which is quite foreign to the continent. Admittedly, all this cannot come about without a certain pressure, both from within states themselves and from outside. Political organisations and civil societies need to be better structured in order to prevent nascent or entrenched oligarchies from darkening for ever the future of Africa, which cannot go on being left in the hands of those who would like to control it by armed force and to whom a mass exodus of the population is only a minor historical incident. In the face of the

⁴⁸ V. Forrester, *L'horreur économique*, 1997 p. 168.

drama that is being played out, we must, as Ainsa says, "think of a possible world"⁴⁹, and that is our "utopia".

⁴⁹ F. Ainsa, *La reconstruction de l'utopie*, 1997, p. 90.

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Africa and the Democratic Challenge

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Faced by the numerous conflicts that are ravaging certain parts of Africa today, it is becoming imperative for every African to reflect on ways of promoting democracy and a culture of peace. But this promotion can only take place in an educational context that is multidimensional. This was one of the broad subjects of discussion at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, which took place in Hamburg, Germany, in July 1997 under the aegis of UNESCO.

Having been responsible for coordinating the theme “Adult Learning and Democracy: The Challenges of the Twenty-First Century” during the course of this important meeting, the author of the present essay would like to attempt, building on his previous writings on this subject, to deepen the concept, keeping in perspective the kinds of elements that need to be put in place in order to ensure a form of adult education that is both viable and beneficial.