1. COMMON OBJECTIONS TO THE IDEA OF SYSTEMATIC CONFLICT ANALYSIS AND RESOLUTION.

You will need to think about these and come up with some individual answers that satisfy you, yourself:

1. All conflicts are different from one another, so there is no possibility of developing any "general" theories about conflict.

2. You will never resolve all conflicts and produce a conflict-free society.

3. You are trying to abolish conflict.

4. You will never be able to "resolve" any serious conflict; the best you can hope for is to manage it - that is, to reduce the level of violence and find a compromise solution that may well turn out to be temporary.

5. Conflicts are healthy for people and societies, and should neither be avoided nor settled too early.

6. Conflicts, aggression and violence are inherent in irrational human nature so can never be resolved.

7. Conflicts are built into political and socio-economic structures, and so-called "conflict resolution" is really a matter of "papering over" fundamental human differences.

8. Stopping conflict runs the risk of perpetuating injustice, especially if the adversaries are highly imbalanced and involve a dominant and dominated party or powerful and powerless parties.

9. How can one hope to resolve conflicts involving the Hitlers, the Husseins or the Milosevics of this world?

10. Scholars should not pretend to be neutral analysts or resolvers of conflicts. Rather they should be in the business of committed conflict creation, especially in situations of economic, political or social injustice.
2. SPITCEROW: A FRAMEWORK OF QUESTIONS TO GUIDE ANALYSIS.

S - What are the origins or sources of the conflict?

P - Who are the parties to the conflict and how did they originally come into existence?

I - What are the main issues in the conflict [both overt and any "hidden agendas"] and how have they changed during the course of the conflict?

T - What forms of behaviour or tactics are the adversaries employing against one another?

C - What major changes have there been as the conflict developed over time; what important thresholds have been crossed?

E - How and in what manner did the conflict enlarge?

R - What roles have other parties played in the conflict [allies, patrons, intermediaries, relevant audiences] and how did these affect the course of the conflict?

O - What was the eventual outcome of the conflict?

W - Can anyone be said to have emerged as a winner, and in what manner, if any, does it make sense to talk of "winners" and "losers"

3. SIX BASIC QUESTIONS BEFORE BEGINNING AN INTERVENTION.

1. Who are the parties and what are the issues?

2. How are the costs and benefits of continuing the conflict distributed between but also within the parties?

3. How would the costs and benefits of ending the conflict be distributed between and within the parties?

4. How might such distributions change in the future, and what factors might bring about such changes?

5. What previous third party initiatives have been taken to
resolve the conflict, and how might these have affected
the parties willingness to entertain yet another?

6. What resolution strategies might be undertaken in the search
for a solution

© Christopher Mitchell, August 1990.