

Many international organizations have benefited from the commitment of Filipino peace groups to share their experiences through publications and conferences. After one conference, Eduardo Marino took the idea of Zones of Peace back to his own community in Colombia, an area called La India.²

In La India, peasants were caught between the army, the paramilitary groups supported by the government, and the guerrillas. Colombian peasants were being summarily executed, exactly as the Philippine people had been. They were told by the army, "You have only these choices: join us, join the guerrillas, leave the area forever, or die." The farmers devised another choice. They went to each group and asked, "Who are you fighting for?" All of the commanders responded by saying, "We are fighting for you!" The peasants answered, "You have been fighting for us for 15 years, but we have been the only victims of this conflict. We ask you to stop fighting for us. We want to stay on the land and work for a living in a safe environment for our children." As in the Philippines, the fighting ended and the farmers were able to grow and market their crops for the first time in many years. Today, despite frequent setbacks and horrifying massacres, 28 Zones of Peace persist in Colombia.

Another of those zones, San Jose de Apartado, is a very active "Comunidad de Paz" which has a Web site and opportunities for international membership to support the community.³ San Jose de Apartado is a small hamlet where peasants had organized a cooperative to market and process cocoa beans. In February, 1997, the paramilitaries came in and ordered everyone to leave, accusing the villagers of running a supply post for the guerrillas. They then dragged the four elected members of the board of the cooperative from their homes and executed them.

Several hamlets combined to declare themselves a Community of Peace and committed themselves to a declaration:

- Not to participate in the war in direct or indirect form.
- Not to carry arms.
- Not to manipulate or give information to any of the parties involved in armed conflict.
- Not to ask any of the parties to solve conflicts.
- Each one commits him/herself to search for a peaceful solution and to a dialogue for solving the conflict of the country.

The idea for the community of peace originated with the Bishop of Apartado, Monsenor Isaias Duarte Cancino. The peasants began to have workshops with the Intercongregational Commission for Justice and Peace (CINAP). The ceremony to declare the community of peace was made in the presence of Pax Christi, the Diocese of Apartado, CINEP and the media. Five days later, the peasants were bombarded by the army and paramilitaries and several peasants were assassinated. The peasants were forced to leave the hamlets under the threat that if they did not, more killings would follow. There were, however, two people from the CINAP accompanying them when the exodus occurred and many of them, feeling supported in their stand, made the decision to stay in San Jose.