

Centar za nenasilnu akciju  
Bentbasa 31, 71000 Sarajevo, BiH  
Tel/Fax: +387/33/440 417  
cna.sarajevo@gmx.net  
www.nenasilje.org

CENTAR ZA NENASILNU AKCIJU, SARAJEVO

# 3-month Report

March - May, 2001

*Centar za nenasilnu akciju (Centre for Nonviolent Action) is a non-governmental and non-profit organisation whose basic goals are peace building, the development of civil society, cross-border cooperation and promotion of nonviolence.*

*Our main activity is to organise and implement trainings (seminars) in nonviolent conflict transformation and to support groups and individuals who wish to do this kind of work. Through training in nonviolent conflict transformation we are aiming to develop political awareness of the training participants, and to pass on skills in nonviolent dealing with conflict. At our trainings CNA gathers people from all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Yugoslavia and Macedonia, hence giving special focus on networking, and communication between people from different areas, whose communication has been interrupted through war and supporting the process of prejudice reduction and communication.*

*CNA started with its work in 1997. It is a registered NGO in BiH, as an external branch of KURVE Wustrow.*

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# INTRODUCTION

Another three months of these “interesting” times (as some of our friends would say) have passed by.

Violence overshadows this period in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). It broke out with the beginning of reconstruction of mosques destroyed during the war, in Trebinje and Banja Luka. There were organised protests in both towns, against the rebuilding of mosques with expressions of national and religious intolerance. This triggered a rush of violence in all parts of BiH. Most of the media and officials’ reactions to those events, and the whole atmosphere brought into the memory year 1992, and the beginning of war in BiH. It’s an indicator how much more has to be done on reconciliation and building of peace and trust and unfortunately, how bad the situation with human rights in BiH is. It requires more comprehensive reflection on where we are now and what way to go.

News from Macedonia are getting lesser and at the same time, worse. Media is becoming accustomed to the situation while the coverage is bad and sporadic, which testifies how serious things are. While almost everything indicates deep ethnic division within the population, we receive many applications for our training events, from people of all ethnic groups in Macedonia. This tells us there are still people willing to work on nonviolent approach to conflicts and peace and trust building. These people definitely should be given all kinds of support in every way possible. We are in touch with our friends from Macedonia all the time, and they provide an overall picture how dominant the fear is there. Many people were paralysed by that fear, but after the initial paralysis, some have become even more active in trust building and giving support to each other. We use this opportunity to thank Jasmina, Memet and many others for their courage to work on peace building and bringing people from different ethnic groups together, in this situation.

We are disappointed with the results of local elections in Croatia. Right wing coalition (including HDZ) won almost the same number of votes as HDZ had won on previous local elections in 1997, when they had been in power. Despite many pro-vote campaigns, only around 46% of the constituency actually voted. It’s disturbing that the right wing coalition won the highest number of votes in those “critical” areas, where refugees and displaced persons should return.

One of the grand events was the international conference: “In Search of Truth and Responsibility - Towards Democratic Future” in Belgrade. There were many guests from abroad, and even more important, from ex-Yugoslav countries. We hope The Committee for Truth and Reconciliation, formed in Yugoslavia, will begin to work actively, as a result of this conference. Elections in Montenegro showed that the independent Montenegro is not a sure thing, as it seemed from aside. Both coalitions, the one in favour of independence and the other one for Yugoslavia have won about the same number of votes. It means that the number of those in Montenegro in favour of staying in the same country with Serbia is higher than the Montenegrin authorities had claimed. Hopefully, the outcome of the elections will force those two blocks in Montenegro to open up a dialogue and talk to each other this time without ultimatums.

Serbian public was very disturbed with the sexual harassment scandal. Socialdemokratija’s party president who is also the vice-president of Serbian government was accused for sexual harassment by the spokeswoman and the member of his party. There are still many speculations about what really happened. The important thing is that for the first time sexual harassment was discussed in public. Almost all the media of conservative Serbian society qualified harassment as a felony.

The most important thing certainly is the implementation of further measures toward peaceful solution to crisis in South Serbia. Extremist LAPBM (Liberating Army of Presevo, Bujanovac and

Medvedja) is demilitarised, and some steps were taken in the course of establishing multi-ethnic police forces. Certain number of Albanians has fled to Kosovo, but we hope the situation regarding security changes, as Yugoslav authorities have promised, so the people feel safe enough to return to their homes.

Neither Albanians nor the Kosovo Serbs are satisfied with the provisional constitutional frame for autonomy of Kosovo that the international administration in Kosovo proclaimed.

Basic Training in Kiseljak (BiH) marked the end of previous and the beginning of this three-month period. It was the first 10-day training with new CNA team members. Training evaluation initiated many discussions about CNA's mission, role, and the concept of the training.

Problems with fundraising for structural financing of the organisation have significant effect on our Team's work, in this moment, when CNA is enlarging capacities and opening an office in Belgrade. It is difficult and rare, to find understanding from donors for our need to open an additional office. The participants of our training events, potential users and organisations we keep in touch with, perceive this need in a completely different way. Number of applications for training events we receive demands double capacities and activities.

Belgrade office will not be open in June, as we planned, due to difficulties with securing financial resources, but we hope it will happen in July. That didn't force us to delay planned activities, so there would be two Basic ten-day training events. One will be organised on Ramsko Lake, BiH, in "Peace House" at the Catholic monastery (organised by Sarajevo team) and the other one will be in Zabljak, Montenegro (organised by Belgrade team). We are doing both of them from our Sarajevo office, which does not have enough capacities (space, telephone lines, computers and other equipment) for organisation of two parallel events, especially if one training happens abroad. We are aware how difficult things will get during this period, and we might not be able to do everything as professional as we've managed to do so far, but we're doing our best.

During this period, we had many guests and visitors in CNA, and we visited other organisations.

We ask you to take notice of our new web address. It is [www.nenasilje.org](http://www.nenasilje.org).

## **MAIN ACTIVITIES**

### **Workshop in Bosniak High school in Sarajevo**

**April 21, 2001**

We received an invitation from Bosniak high school from Sarajevo, to do one-day workshop on Nonviolent conflict transformation for the high school students interested in the subject. One member of CNA training team, in cooperation with the member of "Abraham" conducted this workshop for 20 participants, aged 16-18.

In the first part of the workshop, participants were introduced to the basics of nonviolent communication and were sensitised to violence in social context. In the second part, we did an exercise where civil society, social activism and civil action were discussed. Participants expressed special interest in violence within society and understanding of violence, with plenty of talks about the war in BiH and its consequences for young people. Many interesting

reflections were heard on what caused the violence in the region of former Yugoslavia. There was quite a lot of willingness for reconsidering one's own attitudes and possible solutions to conflicts in BiH.

The importance of this workshop, among other things, lies in the fact that the most of those young people spent the entire wartime in Sarajevo. They grew up in the most violent circumstances, but regardless of that, showed good will and capacities for social activism and nonviolent change of society. Moreover, cooperation with institutions like high schools and university, and educational system in general, is highly important for CNA's future strategy. This one-day workshop shows that this cooperation is both important and possible, which was not the case in the past.

### **Three-day Training in Kiseljak BiH**

**May 8 - 10, 2001**

Suedost Europa Kultur e.V organised three-day training in Kiseljak, BiH, from May 8 - 10, 2001. CNA team members conducted and prepared the concept of the training.

Suedost Europa Kultur e.V. is an organisation from Germany, working in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with several offices in different towns (Tuzla, Bijeljina, Novi Grad, Odzak and Teslic). Their goal is to help local population with de-traumatising program, and to offer help in any way necessary, according to capabilities and capacities of the organisation.

This training was a result of earlier established cooperation between our two organisations. It was supposed to be a continuance of CNA's Ten-day Basic Training, organised from February 23 - March 5, this year. Ten participants, seven female and three male, all of them local staff of Suedost Europa Kultur E.V. in Bosnia and Herzegovina, took part on this training. During the meeting they had before the training, participants chose the following issues to work on them, depending on their own needs:

- nonviolent communication
- teamwork
- identity and national identity
- prejudices
- understanding conflict and conflict transformation
- civil society

While preparing the concept and conducting the training, trainers tried to put emphasis on elements that, in their opinion, may improve teamwork. This was a response to the earlier expressed needs of the participants. Training was intense, with a lot of hard work. Trainers estimate it was because the participants were eager and highly motivated for work. In comparison to the basic training, issues were treated in a deeper and more complete manner. During some workshops, one could sense some participants were unprepared to face their own conflicts, and reluctant and cautious with some themes (first of all, with the issue of national identity). That gave a special dimension to the course of the exercise and the content of workshops. At the end of the training, both participants and trainers expressed their satisfaction with the training and willingness to continue cooperation between Centre for Nonviolent Action and Suedost Europa Kultur E.V., in the same or similar way.

### **Networking Meeting**

As stated in one of our previous three-month reports, networking meeting, for trainers and peace groups from the region of former Yugoslavia, was planed for February 2001, in Groznjan, Croatia, in cooperation with Miramida Centre from Groznjan. We have applied for funding of

this project at Westminster Foundation from London. Unfortunately, we received a letter from the Foundation saying we were not granted the funds because of the lack of resources for this type of projects, despite their earlier interest for cooperation on this project.

Therefore, the beginning of this project was delayed to November 2001. Project proposal was sent to Council of Europe, Confidence-Building Measures Program in Strasbourg, for financial support. The contents of this meeting stay the same as original proposal.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### Round Table on Conscientious Objection

Group for Conscientious Objection "Unija 47" - Anti War Campaign of Croatia  
Zagreb, Mama, March 28, 2001

One team member facilitated round table on *Conscientious Objection and Civil Service*, organised by Unija 47 in Zagreb, Croatia. Representatives of conscientious objection groups from Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Croatia took part in the event. Unfortunately, guests from Yugoslavia did not get their visas in time to make it to the meeting. There were few people from Croatia (about 15 altogether), mostly conscientious objectors and few media representatives (Croatian Radio Television, Vecernji list and Republika newspapers).

The intention of this round table was to enable exchange of experiences of conscientious objection groups from ex-Yugoslav countries and initiate action to improve conditions for civil service in the region. Regional approach to the issue of civil service is considered necessary, because in all the countries of former Yugoslavia there is mistrust toward demilitarisation. It is justified with the fear of endangerment and possible new armed clashes.

First part of the meeting presented current situation on conscientious objection in different countries, which was followed by a discussion. Presentation already displayed how drastically different that is in every country in the region. Slovenia, having had civil service for quite some time, is faced with the problem of too many requests for civil service and not enough suitable organisations for it. In Macedonia, though, conscientious objection is recognised as a human right, but the institution of civil service still does not exist.

This round table was a good chance to discuss actual situation and conflict in Macedonia. A question remains about the way other countries from this region may support conscientious objectors and deserters in case conflict breaks out. Such an initiative has already been started, and the members of Unija 47 and other organisations are investigating legal regulations and preparing "shelters" for deserters and conscientious objectors, in case there's a need for that in the future.

During the second part of the meeting, there was a discussion about the platform for joint activities. A need for exchange of experience and support between the countries that already have accomplished some results in civil service (Slovenia, Croatia), and those that still have to work on this issue, was pointed out.

The first step of this cooperation might be a petition written by Unija 47. After the initial dilemma whether to continue using present legal terminology or to insist on changing that vocabulary and to make other demands (e.g. legal term is "civil service of military service ... is served to the state"), some disputable parts of this document were revised. It was agreed not to continue using present legal terminology, but to make demands of conscientious objectors in order to change this vocabulary, too, and thus, directly pass on the message and values objectors stand for.

It was agreed to send the petition to as many organisations as possible and to deliver it to the presidents of countries, prime ministers and defence ministries on May 15 - Conscientious Objectors Day. Government representatives from Slovenia and Croatia mention demilitarisation to be one of their strategic goals, and some changes are indicated in FR Yugoslavia. Having that in mind, joint appeal of conscientious objectors and this round table represent a possible beginning of the regional cooperation. In most parts of this region, at this moment, there are not any open conflicts. However, there is clearly expressed wish for cooperation and exchange, so we see the demands of conscientious objectors for regulating civil service as an important step toward demilitarisation of the region.

An open question remains about the response to this initiative in different countries in the region. This is, however the first step in an attempt to clearly articulate the message from conscientious objectors about carrying guns and the message of nonviolence, and address them to the authorities. Over the past ten years message of nonviolence was marginalized to the point of being presented as threat to national security and that is still the case. All of the above, point out to the complexity of the problem. Moreover, it indicates the importance of the initiative for creating and promoting dialogue between countries of this region. Long term, there is a potential to create a sustainable peace.

*For more information, please contact Unija 47, [unija47@zamir.net](mailto:unija47@zamir.net)  
url: [www.zamirnet.hr/unija47/](http://www.zamirnet.hr/unija47/)*

## **Training for Trainers (II) - Centre for Peace Studies**

**Zagreb, March 29- April 1, 2001**

One of our team members took part on the second session of Training for Trainers, which was held in Centre for Peace Studies (CPS). Training was organised and conducted mostly by Vesna Terselic and Goran Bozicevic, while some of the participants took part in facilitation of some exercises.

The first session was focused on the workshop itself, parts of it, choice of methods and performance. The second part was more focused on the training altogether and the dynamics of it. The issues advisable for the central part of the training, after the mutual trust within the group had been established, were given more attention. There was an interesting discussion on the subject of values promoted through trainer's work on peace building, especially those difficult for individuals to promote (acceptance, tolerance, cooperation, ...).

Central issues of this part of the training were social change and social justice, power, identities and gender roles. An interesting conversation was led on the following: why are these subjects difficult for students?, what are the possible difficulties when we elaborate them?, what's the responsibility of facilitator, what are individuals empowered for on these training events? where is the social change? Emphasis was drawn to the importance of social context on the actual workshop. Social context should be the part of the whole story, rather than pushed aside. Analysis of everyday situations and participants' experiences, highlighting the things important for the present moment, for both individual and society, results in positive changes of society. Therefore, empowering (individuals) outside of the social context remains on a symbolic level and does not contribute to the social change.

Refreshment to this training came with the visit and presentation of research "Women and Media"

Unfortunately, there was no time to discuss the actual method and choice of exercises.

Participants also had a chance to take part in theatre of oppressed, while one of the facilitators was our team member.

This session of the training, ended with an evaluation of those three days and a discussion on issues trainers wanted to know more about, and use in their future work. It was agreed that the next session should happen from June 1 - 4, 2001, this time outside of CPS office, in MIRamiDA Centre in Groznjan.

*For more information, please contact Centre for Peace Studies, Zagreb, Croatia, email: [cms@zamir.net](mailto:cms@zamir.net)*

## **QPSW/Amnesty International - Seminar on Human Rights**

**Banja Luka, BiH, April 3- 5, 2001**

Two of CNA's team members participated on the Seminar on Human Rights in Banja Luka, BiH, from April 3 - 5, 2001. QPSW and Amnesty International (AI) organised it. This seminar is the third part of the education these two organisations provide for a group of young people, actively involved in local initiatives in BiH. The first and the second event took place in April and September of 2000, in Sarajevo within 4 days (1+3). During this part of the program, the following issues were worked on:

- Human rights in BiH
- Women rights
- Conscientious objection to military service
- Strategic planning of human rights campaign
- Children's rights

Trainers were Edin Tuzlak (AI Croatia), Brian Phillips (International Secretary of AI and QPSW London) and Maja Aberg (AI Sweden).

Besides those people who participated in previous events, this seminar was open for a certain number of new people, interested in the subject, among them two of CNA's team members.

We find that themes chosen for the seminar meet the needs of the target group. The emphasis was on the importance of an individual to participate actively and take responsibility for protection of human rights and their promotion within community. The issue of individual's role in creating the culture of human rights has not been even touched, although human rights have been worked on for the last couple of years in BiH. In respect to that, we consider the previous methods unproductive. Most people consider international organisations working in BiH to be an "activist" who will engage itself in advocacy of their human rights, not recognising their own role in the process (apart from the role of the victim). This kind of seminars open up a space to talk about many things in everyday work that are "taken for granted".

*For more information, please contact QPSW Sarajevo. E-mail: [qpsw@bih.net.ba](mailto:qpsw@bih.net.ba)*

## **Round Table - Workshop on Quakerism**

**Banja Luka, April 6, 2001**

Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) BiH organised round table on Quakerism in Banja Luka, BiH on April 6, 2001. Two of our team members took part on the event. Round table was attended by representatives of some NGO's from BiH, supported by QPSW (Carpe Diem-Zenica, Human Rights Bureau-Tuzla, A.I. Initiative Group-Banja Luka, Women to Women-Sarajevo, Luna-Rudo, Uno-Srpsko Sarajevo, Vive Women-Tuzla, Alter Art-Travnik etc.) Brian Phillips and Celia McKeon conducted the event. Participants were able to learn about the history of Quakerism, principles on which Quakers practice is based upon and different aspects of their

work throughout the world and in BiH. During the final evaluation, participants and facilitators expressed satisfaction with the course and contents of round table and hope to continue cooperation.

*For more information, please contact QPSW Sarajevo, E-mail: [gpsw@bih.net.ba](mailto:gpsw@bih.net.ba).*

### **Group of NGO Activists Concerned about the Children's Rights in BiH**

During the seminar on human rights in Banja Luka from April 3 - 5, 2001, organised by QPSW, Sarajevo and Amnesty International, a group of NGO activists from BiH gathered and initiated a meeting with representatives of Ministry for human rights and refugees with the Ministry Council of BiH. Besides one team member of CNA, group assembled activists from QPSW-Sarajevo, Carpe Diem-Zenica, Human Rights Bureau - Tuzla, Amnesty International Initiative Group - Banja Luka, Women to Women - Sarajevo, Luna - Rudo, Uno - Srpsko Sarajevo. This meeting was motivated with the concern for the situation with children's rights in BiH and the obligations BiH has taken upon itself after ratification of The Convention on Children's Rights, which had not been fulfilled until now. BiH has not produced written periodical reports on the situation with children's rights to the UN Committee for children's rights in Geneva, which is the duty of every country that signed the Convention. Two preliminary meetings were held (in Sarajevo on April 24th and in Neum on May 5, 2001) as a part of this initiative where methods of organising and the meeting with the representatives of the Ministry were discussed. Another meeting is scheduled for the beginning of July, and the exact date will be set after the arrangement with the Ministry for human rights and refugees.

### **Roundtable on the Theme of "Conflict Prevention and Peace Building & NGO in the Balkans - Lessons Learned"**

**April 9 - 11, 2001**

Roundtable Seminar on the subject of "Conflict Prevention and Peace Building & NGO in the Balkans - Lessons Learned" was organised by European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation (EPCPT) from April 9 - 11, 2001, in Sarajevo.

This roundtable was a part of EPCPT's regional program for prevention and management of violent conflicts in Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia. The aim of the program is to issue a publication about the history and dynamics of the violent conflicts in the named regions. It would also include a directory containing profiles of local and international organisations involved in peace building.

Participants of the event were local and international organisations working in BiH, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania. Few days in advance, organisations were presented with the preliminary version of the text with the list of conflicts in the mentioned countries/regions. During the conference objectivity of the material was discussed, and some comments, advice, reflections and experiences were expressed. That was a good chance for never ending process of reconsidering one's attitudes, constructive discussion and experience exchange, but also a chance to meet with other affiliated organisations and talk about possible joint projects.

At the moment, CNA supports EPCPT program, so we took over responsibility to gather information on peace building organisations from the countries of former Yugoslavia, which will be printed as a directory of the publication.

*More information on EPCPT is available on their web page: [www.euconflict.org](http://www.euconflict.org).*

## **V.O.D.A. - Seminar for youth from BiH and Croatia**

**Velika Kladusa, April 20 - 23, 2001**

**Organised by: OSCE, CARE International, Centre for Peace Studies, Zagreb**

The second part of cross-border seminar V.O.D.A. took place in Velika Kladusa, BiH. Original intention of this part of the seminar was to work on completing suggestions for joint actions/projects and to prepare their implementation. In the course of the project, it turned out this goal was too ambitious and inadequate to the situation. Group of young people from Croatia was feeling unsafe, because of the fact the training was conducted in Republic of Srpska, Serbian entity of BiH. Things didn't change much after the training had been moved to Federation of BiH. This development proved to the organisers how additional work on reducing prejudices and getting to know each other must come before encouraging joint projects. After the first part of the training, evaluation showed most participants were empowered and ready for cross-border cooperation. However, when they returned to their own communities, situation turned out to be more complex, and intolerance, closeness and fear much more present than we had expected.

Unwillingness of one part of Croatian group to come to the seminar in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the fact that there wasn't any work done on common ideas, between the first and the second part were the reasons to change the concept.

22 participants, 8 from Croatia and 14 from BiH attended the second part of seminar. Due to the described difficulties, it was impossible and inadequate to continue the project as primarily planned. That's why we changed the concept and decided to take further steps in communication skills, prejudice and identity awakening and role of media in creating public opinion. We've spent more time talking about situations in their own communities, participant's motivation for change, potential difficulties and necessary support. It is surprising, how well participants handle lack of understanding from parents and families, and how difficult deal with it if it's from people of their own age. "The support from the elderly is not important, if there isn't any from the young" (Quote from one of the participants).

During evaluation discussions and interviews, participants from both the first and the second part of the training were more sceptical about the joint projects, in comparison to those who were there for the first time. Participants thought that discussion about the situation in their own communities and workshops on communication and prejudices were especially useful.

Until today (two weeks after the training), mailing list was set up for participants' communication and exchange of information. Negotiations were open between KAOS (Alternative Scene from Kostajnica) from Hrvatska Kostajnica and Youth Club from Velika Kladusa to act together against the disposal of nuclear waste in the area close to the Croatian and Bosnian border, in Trgovska gora. Plans are being made for a concert with bands from Croatia and Bosnia, against the nuclear waste disposal. Some other organisations and participants of this training (R.O.D.A., Sisak, Croatia) should be involved in it.

## **QPSW seminar: *Developing Collegial Relations and Forming Coalitions***

**Neum, BiH, May 3-07, 2001**

Two males and one female member of CNA team attended the training on the theme of *Developing Collegial Relations and Forming Coalitions*, organised by Quaker Peace and Social Witness - Sarajevo, and conducted by Mladen Majetic. Representatives of about 12 NGO's from Bosnia and Herzegovina attended three-day seminar. This part of the training was the

continuation of *Public Advocacy*, which most of the participants got to know few months earlier on the training in Mostar.

Very quickly, training has moved from an abstract level and general talks about forming coalitions toward more concrete dimension, because of participants' interest to analyse current situation in BiH.

Current coalitions and networks existing in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the relationship between local and international organisations, and foreign donors were discussed. In my opinion, the important was the conversation about coalitions and networks imposed "from the top". Some organisations were dragged into it, often without their own initiative, motive or interest and as a result of that there were different relations between organisations.

There was an obvious caution while expressing one's views. During the discussion, organisations were often labelled as "powerful" or "weak", but there wasn't enough willingness to get into the discussion in more details, about the criteria according to which some organisations are considered powerful and the other weak.

Concerning the current situation, most of the organisations are in somewhat dependant relationship towards foreign donors and international organisations. Most of them are part of the networks and/or coalitions. They don't recognise their own role or interest in those networks or coalitions, and they are often not in accordance with the mission of the organisation. The dilemma remains whether or not to react in these situations, because, in participant's opinion, sometimes it means not getting any more information and funds, "getting out of the picture".

We hope further discussion on this subject and activism in BiH will continue with the same participants, and eventually involve other groups and wider public.

QPSW provided an advisory possibility within the framework of this programme that CNA has benefited from. Mladen Majetic was in advisory visit at CNA in May providing his support through expertise, concerning the issue of networking improvement that CNA has identified as needed. Although structured in the form of a daily workshop, the meeting was not facilitated but moderated, which caused strong resistance by some members of the team. Despite the fact that some of the staff felt the initial moderating style to be authoritarian, the conflict has been addressed and the workshop leading method changed which enabled fruitful work.

*For more information, please contact QPSW Sarajevo. E-mail: [qpsw@bih.net.ba](mailto:qpsw@bih.net.ba)*

## **Seminar on Missionary Work and Inter-religious Dialogue - "Abraham"**

**Fojnica, BiH, May 11 - 13, 2001**

"Abraham", Sarajevo organised three-day seminar on the theme of problems of missionary work in inter-religious dialogue. Seminar was held in Fojnica, BiH with 25 participants from BiH and FRY. Most of the participants were Christian and Muslim theologians, and lecturers from the Catholic and Islamic Faculty of Theology, as guests.

CNA was invited to conduct one block of the seminar with the interactive exercise. Participants had the chance to try out roles of religious groups they didn't belong to. Thus a possibility was opened for re-questioning of other group's views from one's own stand, instead of doing that from the position of certain dogmatic religious doctrine. This effect led to the discussion on every individual's right to freely choose religious group they would or wouldn't belong to, instead of the one imposed by society or with birth. There were, also many discussions about the principles of violence and nonviolence in the context of religious missionary work that led

to the conclusion, it was the best way to explore the problem of missionary work. In other words, when it comes to affirmation of oneself and one's own values, to the point of not threatening someone else's integrity or forcing something upon them, what might happen in an inter religious dialogue, what is a basis of nonviolent action in general.

This was a very demanding subject, which requires far more than three days of work. It was one of the first meetings of this kind in the region, and it's a big step toward inter religious dialogue, as one of the elements necessary to build sustainable peace.

More information on this seminar is available from "Abraham", Sarajevo. E-mail: [ibrahime@bih.net.ba](mailto:ibrahime@bih.net.ba)

## **Conscientious Objection - Round Table**

**Sarajevo, 15<sup>th</sup> May 20001**

On the International Day of Conscientious Objectors, Sarajevo organisations „Women to women“ in cooperation with Schueler Helfen Leben and Why Not (Zasto ne) have organised a round table about the issue of conscientious objection to military service.

Representatives of Federal Defence Ministry, OSCE Human-Rights Office, UN Office of The High Commissioner for Human Rights, various youth groups from Bosnia-Herzegovina, NGOs and pupils of Sarajevo high schools have attended the event. Few guest activists from Yugoslavia and Croatia were also present.

The right to conscientious objection has been discussed, just as initiatives seeking to promote this right and possibilities for further joint action. Regional cooperation on this issue has been recognised as beneficial to the cause of the work. Unfortunately, most of the participants did not know about the similar meeting held in Zagreb on 28<sup>th</sup> March this year, despite the fact that a representative from BiH was present. This speaks of poor information flow and the need for better communication and coordination. Guests from Yugoslavia who also attended the Zagreb meeting have passed on information and conclusions from that meeting. At the end, all organisations represented expressed interest in further work on the issue of conscientious objection and affirmation of the right to CO.

## **Preparatory meeting of the Education group of the South East European Project (Conference of European Churches) at Osijek Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights (CPNHR),**

**28<sup>th</sup> May 2001**

The meeting was preparatory with the goal of shaping work strategy for peace education of religious groups, which is a CPNHR coordinated part of the CEC project, which also includes parts on inter religious dialogue and media. The meeting was attended by activists from Croatia willing to join in the project implementation and the three CNA staff.

At this occasion we all visited the Osijek Centre for the first time and have left strongly impressed the resources that Centre has at their disposal.

## APPENDIX

At the request of Austrian Peace Services, CNA team member has written an article for their "Peace Newspaper" on the subject of reconciliation, with an overview on the present situation in BiH, with respect to the establishing of peace. We enclose the complete article.

### **To Condemn and (or) to Accept**

*Adnan Hasanbegovic*

Recent events in Banja Luka and Trebinje, regarding the violent obstruction of rebuilding the destroyed mosques while people were stoned, were not at all unexpected, but on the contrary, gave an overall picture of the situation in BiH. Human rights violation of all kinds is dominant over the past several years in post-Dayton BiH. Minority groups and people with different political opinion are exposed to direct violence, like throwing grenades at returnees, setting explosive in cars, etc. It happens often enough, so it's no surprise to the public and it makes no headlines in media. It's enough to watch the news and look at the local papers that resemble to war bulletins and still use the language of hatred. The list of single cases of violence and discrimination with political background would certainly be very long, in case someone cares to make one. It doesn't seem to be very productive to treat each and every one of them, for the sake of public reaction or the appeal.

The Dayton Agreement, which represents some sort of constitution of BiH, as someone has already said, did stop the war, but nevertheless did not bring the peace. The absence of war is additionally complicated with the dual understanding of The Agreement from different political factors and inconsistency when it comes to implementation of single decisions. Victims of war and post-war violence are being manipulated for the sake of politics, in many regions, authorities secretly support radical nationalistic violent groups, different political views of situation in BiH are being ignored, and decisions agreed on legal and executive organs are being obstructed. These are just some of many consequences of unclear articulation and shallowness in the approach to establishment of sustainable peace and building of stable and democratic society.

Responsible for these difficulties, however, are not only local actors, but also the international community. It seems that international community, despite its presence in BiH with many instruments to act, does not manage (except for imposing some laws and occasionally arrest war criminals), to set some long-term directives and create a system that is fair and represents a precondition for development of civil society in BiH.

General cause for this situation, in my opinion, is the wrong approach from the very beginning, to the peace building, civil society, reconciliation, and, if I may say so, facing of the truth about the violence in this region. Before all, there is an absence of an analysis and reconsidering factors that led to violent resolving of social conflicts after disintegration of Yugoslavia. This was never completed thoroughly. Moreover, although we did to a certain point, analyse social systems created after the disintegration of former Yugoslavia, like those of Milosevic and Tudjman and labelled them as totalitarian and responsible for violence, we never defined what were their historical, political or economic causes. On the other hand, when it comes to responsibility for war, ethnic communities have each their own media enrooted images. Even today, although these regimes are gone, political turmoil, discrimination and violence continue, especially in BiH.

One of the big mistakes in BiH, is also the lack of strategy to build NGO sector, a core of civil society. There was an attempt to establish NGO sector after the war, with a lot of money for their registration, without their previously articulated goals derived from relevant social demands. Consequently, today there is a huge number of organisations with a frequent changes of their mission, with no prior need analysis, in search for money, or just disappearing because there's no money.

If the end of the war had to be imposed, that should never be a principle of civil society. On the contrary, it has to be built slowly and thoroughly, while insisting on development of civil and political activism among local people, in order to create the basis for self-reexamination and local initiatives for changes and reconciliation.

All of that, indicates that the end of the war in Bosnia, unfortunately, is still a result of heavy military presence of SFOR and international community, but not the result of reconciliation and actual confronting with violence that has happened and is still happening. One might say that for many people, intimately, war has not yet ended, because of the unsettled political situation or transformation of present social conflicts of all kinds, especially ethnical.

Local individuals, political and civil groups and organisations have primary responsibility to deal with these problems. First of all, responsibility means, to condemn and inflict penalty upon actors of violence from one's own national collective. Right now, that is the jurisdiction of The Hague Tribunal - role of The Tribunal in this particular context requires separate analysis, still however worthwhile it may be, we will leave it for some other occasion. Responsibility also means to re-question one's political visions and needs. It is especially important to try and look at the facts about the enormous victims of war and accept responsibility for that, whether or not we were active or passive participants of the war and violence. It's only then that we open some actual possibilities for constructive reconciliation and transformation of conflicts that caused the violence. Institutional changes, such as an introduction of the state of law and protection of minority rights should accompany and enable this process, but cannot alone accomplish the goal of reconciliation.

In order to make such a thing possible, a lot has to be done on empowering and education, and also de-traumatization of people from this region. The important thing is to popularise different types of peace education, through both NGO activities and institutions and structures within the system, and to offer space for individuals from different social groups to reconsider their own and other's views of the problem.

One should certainly put emphasis on education in nonviolent conflict transformation and nonviolence in general, because it's flexible and multi-purposed, and represents a good method to create critical mass of groups and individuals capable to deal with difficulties of reconciliation. It is important to offer programs for work on refining mutual communication, sensitising toward structural and other kinds of violence, popularise nonviolence and philanthropy, and empower people to take more responsibility for social issues in general. Making education on peace and civil society a part of educational system on each level can be very important.

Also, lot more should be done on organising as many conferences and lectures, with the subject of reconciliation, forming multiethnic expert teams to work on analysis of historical elements of the present conflicts, and analysis and reconsidering of the Balkan history, because it's been manipulated a lot. Our experience tells us it is necessary to have a regional approach to work on these problems, including countries of former Yugoslavia.

It is recommended to analyse possibilities to start political and civil lobbying for total demilitarisation of Balkans and to begin working toward that goal, and create preconditions for it.

At the end, although there are many problems, there is also optimism to face all the difficulties, because there is an increasing number of mostly young people from all around of former Yugoslavia. They have the capacities and capabilities to deal with the situation through social activism and promotion for their own values and society they live in.

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CNA will very much welcome feedback, suggestions, questions and criticism concerning this report and our general work.

Your thinking helps us along!

Thank you.

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Adnan Hasanbegovic  
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Milan Colic  
Nedžad Horozovic  
Nenad Vukosavljevic

For Centar za nenasilnu akciju

In Sarajevo, June 2001

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