

# 8

## ANNUAL REPORT



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# 8th ANNUAL REPORT

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## ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR NONVIOLENT ACTION

Eight people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia are the nucleus of the Centre for Nonviolent Action (CNA). We have offices in Sarajevo and Belgrade and we work on peace building in the region of former Yugoslavia, from Macedonia, across Kosovo and all the way to Croatia. Figuring out from our names, those who want to, may conclude what different nationalities we have in our team: Adnan Hasanbegović from Sarajevo, Nedžad Horozović from Doboj, Helena Rill from Sombor, Ivana Franović from Belgrade, Milan Colić Humljan from Babušnica, Sanja Deanković from Split, Tamara Šmidling from Belgrade and Nenad Vukosavljević from Belgrade. What is important for us is that we are connected with the feeling of human solidarity unbounded by the existing borders and by our dedication to peace work and an idea of social justice pursued in a nonviolent way. It is also important to us that all of our differences bring us together by respecting them, help us learn from each other and change ourselves and the society around us.

### What nonviolence!?

Nonviolence is not accepting and not doing injustice.

Nonviolence is acting against injustice and discrimination, whereat we try not to do injustice ourselves and to offer and leave everyone a chance to change their behaviour, not to judge people because we don't have the right to, but to criticize the actions that endanger the others. And to apply the same standard to everybody.

We do not see nonviolence as an ideology but as a permanent process of re-examination of one's own action, opinions and events in the society. Our individual motivations overlap at this point, whereas individually, they are rooted in faith, experience of injustice and in solidarity with those exposed to injustice.

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# INTRODUCTION

Dear friends,

For both Centre for Nonviolent Action's offices, the autumn is traditionally the time of the year when we write reports and in a certain way settle accounts of the previous twelve working months. This September, again we look back in an attempt to view our current position, as well the impact of our work on the society we live in, at the same time striving to direct most of our energy and concentration towards some future, not necessarily limited period of time.

It is never easy to answer the question "Where are we?" which is logically followed by another one "Where is it that we'd like to be?" Having in mind previous twelve months, we can say with quite certainty that we're on the path of change, experiment and innovations. The only thing we're not changing is our main goal and our mission – building a society that is more just, human and open. And, since there are many ways to reach each goal (even though we may not always see them), we choose different methods and approaches through which we try to make the strongest impact to the environment we live in, but also to open up some space for our own creativity and affinities to blossom and bring us the needed joy of work and creative process.

The training as a methodological approach remains to be a central part of our yearly (or further) plans. Along with our usual basic training events in nonviolent conflict transformation and the training events for former combatants, the previous year was marked with the introduction of the advanced training in our yearly calendar. However, our plans are more and more entangled with other type of activities that include the following:

- Shooting several documentaries with a strong peace message and even stronger potential to make the work we have been doing for years, very visible in the public in a clear, sublimed form that is receptive to various people in various places (not just in the region of former Yugoslavia) who have different life stories.
- Preparation and publishing of publications (the one on the theme of reconciliation is in the final phase), that are not only the innovation of our work but also very suitable way to involve a whole network of people from our region that collaborate with us, thus checking once more (which always turns out to be useful) how much we really can do and what are truly our capacities. For both new things and cooperation.

As for the other question, concerning where we'd like to be, it is important to us to say that all the answers to that question, in the context we work and live are somehow torn apart between solid plans and feelings and some personal and shared desires that seem like daydreaming, when scepticism strikes ... But we've been persevering, ever since 1997, and we do some new and some old things, changing them and adjusting them to some new needs and tendencies in our society. Even though sustainability is still unattainable for us, and a whole bunch of great ideas and visions is still waiting for some better times, we maintain on what we consider our call and there are more and more people with us. That really isn't that little!

## Basic Training Events

In the past year we've held four basic training events: in Tivat, Montenegro in October 2004, in Vogošća, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in December 2004, another one in Tivat in February 2005 and the one on Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in August 2005. We had planned to hold one more training in April this year, but due to an unsatisfactory response of potential participants from certain regions we decided to postpone it.

In the past 8 years during which the basic training events have had an important place in CNA's work, we've got the impression that they developed and changed according to our experience, socio-political situation and the groups of people we worked with. In this article you can read about some common characteristics of basic training events that we organized-facilitated during the past year. In order to understand the training concept better, it is necessary to mention that the region of former Yugoslavia is struck by a rather difficult economic situation, national (or perhaps even nationalistic) parties still win the elections, there's a lot of intolerance, or even hate against "others" and "different" and some regions continue to bear a great potential for the escalation of violence.

### *Concept*

While working on basic training events, we noticed that participants were in general somewhat badly informed and unfamiliar with socio-political context, not just in other regions but also in their own, which significantly interferes with work on peace building. Since the time lag between today and the 90's wars that had happened in this region is increasing, the level of unfamiliarity is rising (especial with younger people, who do not have that much contact with the past, or to be more precise, they do not know about it). We are thinking of the right way to approach participants in our work on problems that exist in our communities, that is to say, how we really "see" them because there's often an escape from the things that are really painful, hard and related to the war (for example nationalism, intolerance and so on) to the themes that may be characterized as a commonplace (like drug addiction, environmental protection, etc.). With respect to that, we try to incorporate discussions about dealing with the past in different themes, while one of the approaches to this subject is through national identity which was one of the important outlines of the previous training events.

In the past, the concept of the training was more based on conflict and its understanding, while now the most frequent outline of the training events is violence which is covered in the workshop "violence", but also as a part of other themes including conflict transformation. This kind of concept is very much related to socio-political situation (which is burdened with violence) and with the groups' structure. That is perhaps the reason why sensitization for violence, and especially the structural violence, may have such an impact on participants and why the theme of violence is another outline of the training. It seems however, that sometimes there's not enough willingness for work on rising awareness of one's own responsibility for various forms of violence that exist in the

society and especially in local communities. Also, over the time, we recognised the need for refreshment of the concept of basic training in methodological and conceptual way, and one of the novelties with respect to that is an introduction of nonviolent action and peace building into the concept, aiming to encourage and empower participants to act in their own communities and to bring them closer to activism as one of the forms of social action.

### *Groups*

Recently we've been receiving more and more applications from younger people who didn't have immediate war experiences, or were too young to experience the war directly. Therefore, there's often ignorance concerning socio-political situation and/or disinterest when it comes to looking back at the past or dealing with it. Particular problem is the fact that Albanians from Macedonia and Kosovo, as well as people from Croatia rarely apply for training events, which makes it more difficult to work on regional level, and does not allow the "other side" to be heard. We noticed that there's slightly more applications from people of Albanian ethnic background in cases when a member of the training team is a person who might be perceived as Albanian but we do not know exactly what are the reasons for that. On the other hand, the number of applications from Vojvodina has increased, which can be interpreted as a result of the work of group "React", since they started to work in Vojvodina at the end of last year.

In general, all the groups we worked with were motivated to work. Some of them were more focused on personal plan and personal re-examination while others were more interested in observing social concept. What is missing is reflection and link between personal responsibility and social events in the communities where participants come from and in the wider region.

These basic training events which were held till June 2005 were the bases for selecting the participants of the Advanced Training which was held from June to August 2005.

### *Team*

All of the training events that we organized last year were held in cooperation with our colleagues who had once went through our Training for Trainers Programmes. That is, as a part of the teams for basic training events, besides people from CNA we included people from our last year's Training for Trainers Programme and from the year before that, which was a great work experience. It's our way of supporting people, a way for them to gather some new experiences and for us too, because we also get some new influences on training (from another perspective).



## *Funding*

In the past year, the basic training events were financially supported by German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), German Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sarajevo office of Norwegian People's Aid. We receive the biggest support from BMZ, just as we did last year, while obtaining financial support for basic training events only remains quite difficult.

## **Advanced Training in Nonviolent Conflict Transformation**

Phase One: Jahorina, 24.6-4.7.2005

Phase Two: Kikinda, August 5-10.2005.

Advanced training in nonviolent conflict transformation is a programme of peace education that we have organised this year for the first time. From our eight year long experience in working on peace education and work on programmes Basic Training and Training for Trainers, we have learned that we keep missing an 'intermediate step' in the peace education, primarily for people who would wish to further their knowledge after the Basic Training, whilst not necessarily being interested in trainers' work. We have therefore developed the concept of the Advanced Training programme that represents continuation and deepening of the subjects from the Basic training, further sensibilisation for violence, promoting and further developing the skills attained during the Basic Training, as well as work on the issues of how to work within a community and on peacebuilding. An important segment of this programme is by all means further learning, searching, finding and exchanging knowledge on many other activities and approaches that constitute the work on peacebuilding, putting training as a method in the background.

The programme is conceived as consisting of two phases, a ten day and a five day training. Phase one was conceived as primarily entailing the work on further sensibilisation, re-examining, thinking certain notions out, approaches and attaining and establishing skills (team work, communication, opening, understanding and analysing conflicts, dealing with conflict etc), whilst phase two focuses more on peacebuilding, dissolution of obstacles to the peace that exist in our environments, and concrete suggestions/actions for acting.

Sixteen people from the regions of former SFRY constituted the group: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Kosovo. Almost all of them are active in non-government organisations (mostly human rights organisations), one person is a pedagogue in a primary school and another is active in a political party. The median age of participants was 33, with the youngest person being 22 and the oldest one 56.

The planned number of participants had been 20, but a few people have cancelled their attendance. We experienced the participants as highly motivated for active participation in this programme. The workshops often lasted for longer than planned, for the very reason of high motivation to process a certain subject and also a very pronouncedly active participation of everyone. Many subjects/discussions were started following the participants' initiative. Participants even organised several 'open evenings' themselves, in order to go further in exploring some subjects raised during the workday, or further discuss certain aspects not originally included in the programme (for example, discrimination against people with disabilities and sensibilisation for this issue, discrimination against LGBT population etc).

What the group visibly lacked was the presence of persons belonging to ethnic minorities in their own



environments, because after several persons have cancelled it turned out that the group consisted almost entirely of people belonging to majority ethnic groups in the environments they come from (for instance, there were no Albanians from Macedonia, Serbs from Croatia or Kosovo, Croats from BH etc). This has been our first experience of the 'voice of the minority' not being represented, which was very noticeable and definitely influenced the work, particularly when we worked on the problems and difficulties in the environments we come from or on various types of discrimination surrounding us.

Another striking moment related to the group (not only this particular one but also participants of our other trainings in the past several years) is the fact that people are increasingly less informed about what goes on in neighbouring countries, that there is lack of familiarity with social contexts of other regions, such as political conflicts, wars, and also a certain non-defined attitude towards political and social topics in their own respective regions. At the beginning, we thought there was no motivation to discuss these problems in the first place, because these discussions were fairly 'quiet', unusually so, with little confrontation or questions. Later on, however, it turned out that this is really due to lack of knowledge of the situation, lack of having a defined stance on these matters, so that people would more often than not merely listen to what someone was saying about their region, difficulties, social context...

This is definitely a serious difficulty, because it slows down the work on the subjects of importance for peacebuilding, since familiarising with social and political contexts beforehand is necessary if we talk about work on peacebuilding, particularly at the region level. This is another point we encountered - most people don't have motivation or awareness about the importance of work on peacebuilding on regional level, or most of them are primarily interested in working on local level. On one hand, this is understandable and very important. On the other hand, we see that our role is to 'awaken' this motivation and over the border cooperation, exchange, support, that has to flow parallel to the work on local levels and should by no means be viewed as a phase that follows locally oriented work.

How this 'shift' in motivation occurred is open for discussion. We certainly observe that the lack of information on neighbouring countries is of great influence in the matter.

The trainers' team consisted of CNA team members: Adnan, Helena, Ivana and Milan. We have received financial support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Germany.

We are indeed very pleased by the entire programme. Comparing the points we were at at the very beginning (in terms of sensibilisation for various issues, level of readiness to transform existing conflicts, motivation for work on certain issues, knowing the context, mutual support and confrontation and nonviolent conflict transformation skills) and where we were at the end of the

training, that is what we were in the position to see on the final day of the programme, we feel that all the energy we invested in carrying the programme out was worth our while. Considering that we have become aware of the value of this programme, we decided not to remain in the 'pilot phase' but to include this one into our constant programmes, but keeping in mind to include several points from the evaluation as lessons for the next time:

- Phase Two of the programme (second training) should last for at least two more days
- Make sure that the group represents a 'voice' of an ethnic minority
- During the Phase One, work more on getting to know political and social contexts in the region, and thence on the subject of peacebuilding.

## Training for war veterans (2005)

The fifth training event for ex-combatants from the region of former Yugoslavia, was organised by CNA in the "Dvori Balšića" hotel in Ulcinj, Montenegro.

After the experience we had gathered in the organisation of various activities with war veterans that we had been doing for two years, the original idea was to try to organize a longer, ten day training for combatants from Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The plan was to organise the work on the training in order to grasp the exchange of experiences and emotions related to the time before, during and after the war, sensitisation for various forms of violence in the society, as well as to cover some themes that could be useful to the participants for their work in veterans' associations: communication, teamwork and decision making, exercises in public presentation etc.

Due to various kind of difficulties we encountered we decided to cut down the training, therefore it lasted for only seven days.

While we were preparing the training we already encountered one difficulty: how to find participants who were ready and willing to devote ten days for such activity. For that reason, we decided to start the training with a smaller group of participants (11 people) than we had originally planned, with a certain regional and ethnic imbalance (only one person from Croatia, none of the combatants of the Army of the Republic of Srpska).

From the very beginning, it became clear that we would have to deal with the situation in which one of the participants was obstructing our work and trying to discredit members of the training team. The situation itself wasn't a novelty to us, and in a way it's a constant, accompanying element of the trainer's job. Unfortunately, what were news to us was the intensity of obstructions as well as a total lack of space to transform the awkward situation and the existing conflict for the purpose of increasing a quality of work of the entire group. It was very difficult to build the atmosphere of mutual trust and respect in such a situation; therefore we decided to ask one participant to leave the training so we could continue working with other participants. It was a tough decision in every way – personally, professionally, morally, in respect of our values. At the same time it was the only acceptable solution for us at that moment and we were ready to take the responsibility for all the unpleasant consequences of that decision.

Afterwards, the training was continued with a lot of adjustments to the newly created situation and together with the majority of participants we managed to have quite a fruitful discussions on the following themes: prejudices, personal relations to the war in which all of us participated in one way or another, violence, discrimination, peace building, etc.

Due to the small number of participants, low energy at certain moments and stressful situations that had an impact on all the people in the group, we agreed with participants to cut down the training to seven days.

There are two basic learning points/themes to think about regarding this training – the first one is mainly technical, concerning the need to re-examine the concept of a ten-day training for ex-combatants. Our last experience with this training, tells us that the idea, regardless how challenging and attractive it may seem, is not realistic if we want to gather a completely new group of combatants, who do not have any previous experience with workshop approach to work and training events in the area of peace building. For many people, it is just too long a time because of their other obligations, while the differences between needs that exist within such a wide category of “war veterans” makes it difficult to determine the right focus of such training. A common impression the training team shares is that the longer training is possible with the group of veterans who have already attended some kind of training events, and therefore have a clear motivation to continue their work in the area of peace building.

The other type of learning points is of political provenance. It is a reminder (that we never seem to have enough of) that this group of people is still propitious and very attractive as an object of manipulation by various power circles, primarily those political options and forces who want to freeze the picture of veterans as “tough” guys carrying an increased amount of patriotism (in which case, patriotism is understood as: keeping quiet, ignoring and denying responsibility of “our side” for war and everything about it). Anyone who wants to build equal, partner relationship with veterans in peace work should keep that in mind and it is our common task to search for approaches that undermine above mentioned picture and open up some space for understanding that being a veteran means something different than being a keeper of “national pride”, as well as being a peace activist means something different than “a recipient of Western money and executor of someone else’s directives”.

## **Training for war veterans (2004)**

From September 24 - 27, two-day training was held for the combatants of 1991-99 wars from the region of former Yugoslavia, in the “Bistrica” Hotel in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was the continuation of the training which had been held in Bjelašnica, at the beginning of August. There were 12 participants present, coming from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. The atmosphere within the group was good and it enabled participants to lead open and constructive discussions about various sensitive questions and themes. There was a highly expressed willingness for confrontation, but at the same time there was readiness to hear different opinions. In comparison to the first part of the training, it was noticeable that there was more solidarity and empathy among participants which additionally influenced their sincerity, them becoming aware of their own and other one’s needs, motives and fears as well as understanding them.

The dominant themes were: social responsibility of an individual, causes of the war, war crimes, motives of individuals and groups to take part in the war.

Finally, this training motivated us in CNA to continue organizing training for combatants, because it showed us how inspiring for us it was to work with this target group and how much it potential it offered for multiplication of peace activists amongst the population of former combatants.

## *Tragovi (Traces)*

Documentary film  
Production: Centre for Nonviolent Action  
Author: Nenad Vukosavljević  
(Length: 55 min)

The film premiere:  
Belgrade, September 2005  
Sarajevo, September 2005

The film is going to be offered to TV stations with national frequencies in ex-Yugoslav countries, then also to local TV stations.



Cover design: Ana Humljan Colić

**TRAGOV I** Four former combatants from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia and four people who were close to them at war-time, speak of their motivations to join the war in the nineties and their views of it from nowadays perspective and gained insights in the meantime. Novica who lost his leg in war speaks of his need to communicate with Croats who stood at the other side of the frontline, his wife Borica speaks of the despair she felt when she was left alone with their children. Nermin, a committed Muslim from Sarajevo confronts discrimination against Serbs that happens today, his friend Aco feels the burden that war has left him... Bitterness and the feeling of being betrayed connects their thoughts, but foremost the feeling of responsibility to engage in order to prevent violence from happening as extreme as it once was, and as subtle as it goes on today in various discrimination forms against minorities. The combatant roles are miraculously replaced by roles of social activists who confront mainstream nationalism and hatred against former enemies. Once fighting for their states, today they fight for open borders and freedoms for all people, learning from their experiences and acting according to their feeling of responsibility.

## Soon: *Simulated Dialogue*

*Simulated dialogue* is a series of documentaries aiming to promote better understanding and prejudice reduction between people from Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. It's a conversation about questions that we didn't get a chance to ask each other.

Two of the films from this series are well under progress: the first one depicts the dialogue between Bosniaks and Serbs and the other one deals with the Croatian-Serbian dialogue.

Preparations that preceded the shooting consisted of several phases:

Phase 1: Determining partners who were going to conduct a small research in their surroundings, amongst people with different profiles, in order to gather questions like: "What would you like to ask the other ones (Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks ...)?".

Phase 2: Processing the group of questions and identifying 3-4 of them that were the most painful and the most important ones (separately for both sides that were going to be treated in the film). Formulating additional 3-4 questions that would help clearing up what was in the background of the way people think, understanding their fears, needs, etc.

Phase 3: With the help of our partners, choosing the people who were going to be interviewed and who would answer the questions that were chosen, "ordinary people" belonging to very different social groups: people who work in education, those who participated in the war, members of the families of the missing, young people who do not remember the pre-war period, refugees and displaced persons, peace activists, representatives of religious communities, those who are in the position of minorities in a places where they live...

Most of the material for both films was made during the summer. The first one which deals with the dialogue between Bosniaks and Serbs will have its premiere in February of 2006.



*(Publication on reconciliation and dealing with the past)*

We announced this book in our previous report, although it still didn't have a title then. It required lot more work than we had previously planned, but we expect it to be released before the end of the year.

We here publish for the first time two interviews from the book, and an excerpt from the book's preface, translated into English.

## From the Preface

This is the collection of interviews with people from all over former Yugoslavia, people with different profiles: various age, profession, sex, ethnic background ... What they all have in common is that they are willing to talk about the past, to look at the present time and that they have hopes, fears and wishes for the future. Someone may say that they are just "ordinary people". Perhaps they are "ordinary" because they are neither in some positions of power, nor do they belong to the circle of celebrities who we may often hear or see in the media. But I dare to say that they definitely make the majority of the societies in which we live. Whether they're ordinary or "un-ordinary", they carry along many wishes, fears, revulsion with the situation in the society, thinking, anxieties, aspirations and hopes just as great majority of others do. At the same time, these are the voices we can rarely hear. It's absurd, isn't it? How often (if at all) did you have a chance to hear what it was like to spend an entire time during the war in Sarajevo or in Priština, how does a person from Belgrade, Šibenik, Skopje, Jajce think, what do people in Knin, Gnjilane, Loznica hope for and what do people who lived as refugees, participated in the war or were watching the war on TV fear from?

We wanted to make an effort and find some space for those voices to be heard. Our long-lasting experience of work in peace building showed us how much the exchange of those reflections about some painful issues of our societies contributes to mutual understanding and building of trust: about hopes we have, who we are and what is bothering us, and what we would like to be – as one of the interviewees said "You cut yourself, I cut myself – our blood's the same". Better mutual understanding and trust are crucially important for building of peace, lack of which makes our societies suffer so much.

Reflections that are presented here surely do not fit into the cliché described as "let's have peace, no one's to blame". It is quite possible that some of these opinions are going pinch quite a lot and perhaps you'll think that they should not be a part of the publication that aspires to contribute to peace building. I'd say: Oh, yes, work on peace building surely pinches, since we believe that it is not possible to work on peace building if we neglect the tragic past that we lived in and that many of us still live in. And if we open up the question of the past and take into consideration its complexity – than, of course we will not agree on all issues. That is exactly the greatness of us, "ordinary people": to try to understand the very opinions that are so different from our own (excluding the ones of

fascist provenance — they do not belong here since they usurped enough space all around us). When we manage to come to such an understanding: why does someone think so differently about things than we do (and perhaps it isn't so different, after all), not because they are guided by some blind, inexplicable hate, but by some pain, fear, experience — that is when we will make a big step). As one great "ordinary" man — our friend Dževad Budimlić, said "I cannot feel well if my neighbour does not"...

We asked people and they talked about all those great notions that became phrases, for which it goes without saying what we mean when we say them, while we really understand them in different ways: reconciliation, past, dealing, oblivion, guilt, responsibility, peace, future, life together, war, ... — trying to make them clearer through personal experiences, and not using some other great notions, in order to make space to understand each other better.

We did not aspire to do this as a research on a representative sample that would show where our public opinion is (or in plural: our public opinions). This idea for the book originated from a clear notion that we wanted quality that personal experiences bring along, rather than quantity that would make it a representative sample. As I have already said: there is no room here for some voices, the noisiest and the most aggressive ones.

Inescapable richness of this book is the number of languages that can be found in it. Someone may say that it would be more economical and/or practical if Macedonian and Albanian were printed in separate publications. But we rather liked the idea to keep it all in one place, tightly connected just as our destinies are mutually entwined.

Interviews were made in the period of time from March to November 2005. Eighteen interviewers (also from the region of former Yugoslavia) were responsible for choosing their interlocutors and were free to choose how they wanted to conduct the interviews, in order to cover relevant questions. Interviews were conducted in Albanian, Bosnian, Croatian, Macedonian, Serbian, and perhaps some other languages (Serbo-Croatian, Montenegrin, etc.). Interviews were recorded with a dictaphone and their true transcripts were released here.

It was not easy to choose conversationalists; it required coordination with other interviewers in order to cover diversity of the society and include people with different profiles and opinions while it was difficult to find conversationalists who were willing to talk publicly about painful issues — not a few people felt frightened and uncomfortable. Even though we decided to present them just by their first name, some people felt better being presented only by their initials, mainly for the reasons of their own safety. We understand that fear completely. That is what tells us exactly how deeply our societies are stuck and how much they suffer, but also how urgently we should all act in order to achieve change of the society that is so expected (that doesn't just come down to: "that we all have higher salaries", as one of the interviewees said). I cannot resist but to quote the famous writer Meša Selimović: "Have fear of maverick, have fear of shit — when will you live, then?" And I agree completely with the woman who says that we don't live, but we try to live, instead.

A question remains: who will be interested in this book? We have our list of wishes and recommendations regarding those who should be interested. There's a part of it that corresponds to reality, and there's another one we're not sure about. However, we could use some feedback from the readers, therefore we wish to ask you to send us both your criticism and impressions. Peace work requires action and reaction — so we could change ourselves and the societies we live in.

Ivana Franović

**Esma**

(58)

**Sarajevo**

pensioner

**Interview**

***You cut yourself, I cut myself – our blood's the same***

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*By Tamara Šmidling*

**Tell us about yourself, briefly.**

I'm from Prijepolje, Sandzak. I've been here in Sarajevo for thirty years now. I have two sons, my husband's passed on to the next world, as they say... I'm retired.

**When you go back to the period of the beginning of the nineties and those years just before the war, what is it you remember?**

You usually remember those days of the war like, mortar shells, as they say. When they call you up and say you must run, when we were hiding in cellars and fleeing around the neighbourhood. Me and the kids. By the car, downstairs at late neighbour Branko's – that's where we were the most, spent nights there. The whole neighbourhood, all together.

**Have you felt some sort of hatred at that time, anger?**

No, can't say I have. Don't know. I did have this fear within me, just awaiting like that, with the kids by my side, what's going to happen next. That's what was the worst for me. Somehow you have this uneasiness within your body and all that, you can't sleep, you think of who might come knocking on your door, because that's where we were, on the front line. Whether they'll come to your door. That was the only thing for me. And other than that, as far as the rest of the neighbourhood is concerned, it was easier for me there, having all of them around. Means a lot. I recall, we go to the grandpa's, grandpa wasn't afraid of anything. Shooting everywhere, and yet himself, he's all over the place... When we were all together, we had no fear at all. And we were all sorts – Muslims, Croats, Serbs. All three nations.

**So how were you explaining yourselves, who was this war being lead between?**

I couldn't figure it out, believe me. I myself am from Prijepolje, my neighbours there are Serbs too, here, I can show you pictures, last year they came to visit. Stayed here with me they did. And then, what's the difference now, how can I feel a difference? It all depends on the person. I don't know, I can't get my head around why this is how it happened to begin with...

**You don't have answers now either?**

I really don't have the answer.

**When it comes to this situation now, what does it look like to you?**

Well, let me tell you, we here remained just as we were. Some were here all the time, some fled, like this one neighbour M. You know, everyone around my neighbourhood were Serbs.

I remember, me and the late Branko, God rest his soul, we were eating this bairam baklava in 92, just before the war. He comes over, I had no idea what was going to happen. They said some had had weapons at home, but me, not as much as a

proper blunt knife around. The truth be told. And so he comes over just before bairam. I ask, is it true what they say, and he tells me, 'By god, my Esma, it doesn't look good'. And I tell him, 'Fie, to the devil, why wouldn't it look good.' I thought something was going to clash out there somewhere, on the sides, much rather than in Sarajevo. My husband and I have had no clue that it was going to start roaring in Sarajevo, right in the middle of the Old Town, first of all and most of all. We could see the tanks driving around, up there on the transit, and us – no one as much as lifted a finger, just stood there watching them from the balcony. Branko then says they're summoning his son every now and again, that thing had already started in Croatia. And his wife says to me, 'I won't let anyone beat my child, or let him kill anyone. This is bad'. And they leave for Switzerland, and the late Branko stayed here to look after the house, and he tried to go over to the relatives', in Marin dvor, and as he was leaving, he leaves me the keys to the house, says 'On your life, take this key, if someone wants to come in they can just open the door properly instead of breaking in, let them take everything as long as they don't tear the place down'. Gives me the key for me to keep an eye on his house! The truth be told. He's being truthful with god now, we're the ones stuck in all the lies. So, no way, he could barely make it for two whole days over there, there he is, coming back on the third day. And whenever they celebrated their slava, uncle Branko always gave treats to the kids, candy, chocolate. They invited us, I always went to theirs for their slava. I can never forget that, they used to come over to mine for bairam! I should tell it like it is!

They used to come and visit, they still do to this very day. And when my husband died, they all came to say their condolences, and we went there when they killed uncle Branko...

And in the first year of the war, the neighbour J. made some winter preserves, jam it was, Branko gave it out to us. So she was sending us packages from Switzerland afterwards!

Not everyone's the same, it should be told like it is. As they say, not even the five fingers on one hand are all the same. And heaven forbid, too, us all being the same...

And that, when they killed Branko during the war... We wake up one morning, and I can tell, something's not right. So we go downstairs, where is uncle Branko, we ask, and this one neighbour says to me, 'hush, Djula, they killed him...' And I said, who, I said, killed him, may his own mother kill him for that! I felt so, I felt everything turned upside down inside me. That's when it was really hard for me. You know what, I thought I was going to freak out. That's how I felt. Because, you don't normally see these things. You just hear mortars shooting and all that, mortar shells flying around you. But this was another matter... and it was 'ours' who killed him...

And this other thing I want to say – I used to work in the factory, and in comes this one S. from Vukovar. Used to work as a technologist in the factory in Borovo and he comes over and says: 'They tore Vukovar down to the ground; by god, it's not going to be good around here, you take good care of yourselves!' And he a poor man, so we all gather round and make shoes for him and his family... We were so sad about it, didn't know that's what was going to happen right here for us too! So, when it all started in Sarajevo, he left...

*How can I keep it from you if your loved one was killed somewhere, his throat cut? It can't happen. Or, as I would say, how can I forget the good someone's done me? In the neighbourhood, wherever, nor can my child forget the good that's been done to him. And he can't forget the bad either. Just as I can never forget those cases, this goodness of late Branko for example...*

**How about those shooting from the hill, how did you experience them?**

How? By god... Heaven forbid, that was. I don't know, words fail me, I can't imagine what sort of people these are. When I went to Prijepolje in 1996, first time after the war, I took my children with me. We started from Grbavica. Do you know how nervous I was when we were on Grbavica and we were supposed to climb down to Lukavica, that's where the bus for Serbia was leaving from. I was only waiting for someone to tell me, the bus broke, I wanted to be relieved, to go back. There was so much of that fear. And at the same time, I wanted to go, see my mother and my brother...

And this situation now... you know what, I get goose bumps when that one there says I'm in Bosnia but I'm not in favour of Bosnia! I mean, we should be realistic. How can I not be in favour of you who are here with me, living right here... A neighbour is closer than a distant relative.

That very same neighbour J. used to take me to the doctor when I was too weak to go on my own. None other, she did. And now, what, now I'm supposed to speak ill to her? Please...

**Nowadays, when you hear someone say reconciliation should take place here, how do you understand that?**

I really don't know... It's them over there who should reconcile, those politicians, those, excuse my language, pieces of shit! Who am I to reconcile with, I never argued with anyone to begin with. We had a case of this neighbour, a Serb, right there, he was always grumpy, but I never even argued with him either. And this other one, the one who left and never said a word to us, even him, whenever I meet him today I always ask how are you, how's it going. And he also calls, to wish a happy bairam to everyone.

Who am I to reconcile with? I never argued with anyone, neighbours haven't argued with me, nor I with them.

**How about this higher level, the state level?**

I don't think it's just politics, but it was the politicians who started the fight. They started the fight, and the people were getting killed for no fault of their own. Someone said rightly the other night – I'd rather preserve my own head than the state. The man was right too. We don't have a state! We don't, and just look what's being done to us.

**What is this BH then, if not a state?**

Well, what is it? A country torn to pieces, that's what it is. And I can't put my head around what should be done, believe you me. How they cooked it all up and uncooked it back again, I really don't have a clue... I'm only sorry for the youth today. What are they going to do, today, tomorrow? Even if they do finish schools and all that, but still, where to go from there, how? Those provided for themselves, and their grandchildren and their great grandchildren... And what is it we provided for our children? In an honest way... We did everything nicely, honestly, but, thank god, may we only keep healthy. I hope there is a god...

**And how would you like for this society to be, this BH?**

Like it used to be before. Unified, a single state, as they say, one president, everyone together, Serbs, Croats, Muslims... And the ones who won't have it like that, they're

the ones who should be driven out. Eh, no places like Goli otok any more, but these are not fit to be sent to a Goli otok either. And I mean these politicians who cooked all this up... not the people...

**So, do you see the responsibility of this 'ordinary' folk anywhere in there?**

And what can I do about it now? How am I supposed to know if you were the one shooting or not? Well, I don't know, I don't, I can't be that wise... That's what I was starting to tell you, when I was going to Prijepolje, over Trebevic. One bunker next to another up there, so someone must've known about it all. They had us from up there, like sitting ducks we were... That's no simple feeling... The worst thing is it was the Serbs who cooked it all up, even now they're the ones who are keen on that stuff of theirs, they don't want this, they don't want that, they want something they want and all the rest's in vain. You can see for yourself. What is it that they want, I wonder, we're all made of flesh and blood. We're all going to meet the one maker. But the poor, what can they do? Keep quiet, suffer while you can...

**Do you think the things that happened during the war should be talked about? What's to be done with all these things?**

Well, it shouldn't be hushed up, we need to be realistic. We need to say, let it be known! I want to tell you this too – when my children first started going to school... this is not right. If I could've studied history at school, world war one and two as well, why should this history now be hushed up? They're not allowed to talk much about history. And why is that? It was neither you nor me who did it! Let it be known, let the truth be brought to light, let it be known, why not? If God knows, let people know too. This is an old saying. How can I keep it from you if your loved one was killed somewhere, his throat cut? It can't happen. Or, as I would say, how can I forget the good someone's done me? In the neighbourhood, wherever, nor can my child forget the good that's been done to him. And he can't forget the bad either. Just as I can never forget those cases, this goodness of late Branko for example, maybe they can't forget their thing either, killing and exiling and the lot...

**What can encourage things not to be hushed up?**

The youth shouldn't let it be hushed up! My child can't forget the sound of those mortars shells being shot and all that, and me taking him to the shelter for school. The child can by no means forget that. Of course, my child will have normal contacts with your child, because it wasn't your child who did it, it was some hotheads from who knows where. It will never be forgotten, no question about it, but it will fade in time. And the quickest way to do so would be for the industry to start, for the youth to start working, for there to be as much freedom as possible. There will never be that kind of freedom, my Tamara.

**Can the economy develop, in your opinion, without us dealing with the issue of who is responsible for the war and all that?**

Well, things would be defined if those main culprits were put to prison. And then slowly, slowly, everything would start. And these entities would be abolished, and the youth would come together, everything. And the industry to start. Because, by god, on an empty stomach and with all that pain atop of it, you can't move on... Well, there, my son works with the Serbs, and let him! You too, you are a Serb, aren't you? You cut yourself, I cut myself – our blood's the same!

**Darko**

(30)

**Horgoš**

economist

**Interview**

*Third level of guilt:  
those who didn't turn out at the elections*

*By Tijana Gnjidić*

**Please introduce yourself.**

Darko, from Kula, I work in Horgos.

**What are your experiences from the war, or some memories of the war and the war years?**

Since I was born in 75, I haven't taken part in the war, but I was able to observe my environment. My brother was a participant, as a reservist, they drafted him. An interesting thing happened right after we said goodbye to the brother. Since our old man signed his drafting notice, and he'd never wanted to go, he was hiding and there were rows at home like 'why did you sign it?!', and 'you shouldn't have!', and so my brother had to go. There were some irregularities in their records, the morons over there in the drafting board failed to make a proper record of his leaving. So the cops come over, barging in at four am, they received a tip that he hadn't even gone. The old man comes to meet them, in his pyjamas, they move him out of the way, flash a spotlight all over the place, I'm lying in my bed and they go 'who's that?', the old man goes – 'that's the younger one, leave him alone'. When the brother got back... these were evidently traumatic experiences. He kept shivering, he wasn't himself, kept going to the garden to smoke, he was crying, said he'd seen some dismembered people over there, since he hadn't been a direct participant in the battles, he was located at the headquarters, where they used to bring the wounded. It was during the Croats' invasion on Torjanci, twenty five of them from Kula municipality got killed. It was pretty uncomfortable.

And secondly, I had a girlfriend who fell in love with some character from Bosnia, and then, influenced by that, I guess, she started coming up with some statements like 'the Serbian people should be defended', this and that. I remember having a totally pacifist attitude even back then, like 'oh please, that's rubbish, what are you saying, what's the matter with you'.

So, all these were some kind of indirect experiences. That's it. I haven't had any relatives over there.

**And now, from this ten year long distance, how do you feel and what is the prevalent sentiment in your environment?**

I have personally never had a problem with that, it's never been my war. And when they say 'ours conquered this and that'... which 'ours'? They're not mine. I'm not a member of that tribe waging war on another primitive tribe over there, so, as far as I'm concerned, I have never been a part of it to begin with.

And the environment, it's well known what's being done and what the sentiments are – 30 percent of them are still into it all.

**You think we're heading towards reconciliation?**

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Well, I don't know what reconciliation means. For me, a complete reconciliation can take place not sooner than in four or five decades. When the children who have no memories of the war have grown up, and when their children have started to marry each other, like in Vojvodina between different nationalities and ethnicities. So that's this sort of complete reconciliation, and this thing now, I don't know, merely coping with it all. Those people are sort of like returning a bit...

It can't be done, you know... Human brain is wired in such a way as to reach a solution in the shortest possible way – Serbs have killed my... A Serb, a lunatic, an extremist has killed my father, mother, brother – Serbs are bad. The brain goes straight to 'Serbs are bad' – generalising. That's why arresting those criminals is important, for the real culprit to be located.

### **Is there such a thing as collective guilt?**

Well, there is. Maybe I'd rank guilt in three sort of levels: those who killed – that's the most severe, the second – those who voted, and the third – those who didn't turn out at the elections. Now they're being punished, now they have the radicals in power, like in Novi Sad, say. I am not guilty on the bases of any of these, because I've always come out to vote, I have always been a pacifist and talked against the war, I have always tried to convince people around me they shouldn't vote for Milosevic, that he's the evil. I may have lacked a bit of activism, I have minded my own ass a bit too much, what was I to do in all that, maybe I should've been more active, but that's got to do with charisma too. A man's got to be more charismatic to be able to move the masses. But at any rate, a little less passivity – that's what I could hold against myself. That's it.

### **It's up to whom to initiate the process of reconciliation?**

Well, there, I told you. To arrest those guys, sentence them. So, it's the authorities first. And then, apologies... What does an apology mean to someone who has lost? I don't know. In any case it should happen, but I can't tell what good it will do. Apologies on whose behalf, mine? Well, alright, maybe for this form of passivity I had shown. I don't know, it should probably be initiated at highest levels, and then... I don't know. It takes time for this process to happen.

### **Do you see it starting?**

The passions have calmed down at any rate, that's the first step. But then, how long was it I estimated it was going to last, four or five decades.... I think it's started, let's say.

### **How do you think the upbringing of the young is going on? What are the values they are presented with and will they, in forty years, with pure hearts...**

There will be germs of it even then, but this first generation under the influence of biased parents, they will probably be like 'Serbs – that not good', 'Croats – that evil' etc. So it won't be until the third generation, the children of this children now growing up, they will have been under the influence of less biased parents and more normal, for sure. Some mixed marriages will begin to happen etc.

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**Can you define reconciliation? What does it mean to you?**

Well, there, I've already told you – for it to be on the level of this life in Vojvodina between people, for it to function like that – you're Croat, I'm, I don't know, Ruthenian, now we're going to make babies, or you're going to be my friend, anything. That's reconciliation, for me.

**And facing the past?**

Well the truth has to be known. I don't know, it's a tricky question. There, during WW 2, I'm not really that well informed about history, how many Hungarians were there among the horthyans, how many of them were partisans, lie might be a good thing at times, I don't know. Because, in primary school we were taught that there were both Hungarian and Ruthenian units of partisans, and there were the horthyans too, maybe I'd subconsciously see them as bad now, I don't know. No idea, it's a tricky question.

**And on 'this' side?**

All those people should be redeemed. By admitting, 'yes, we had voted for Milosevic'; they were probably blinded at the time and said 'so we should, so we should too, they attacked us too, they wanted to exile us', and now, when all has settled, now they go 'well, that's horrid', a part of them says 'that's all been edited'... I think everyone should do something for their own soul. And those women who had voted, the ones who'd never have to go to the war, that's what had always annoyed me the most – 'Voja knows how to put it, Voja knows'. And those who hadn't taken part, hey too should know what had been done, become aware of that, see a bit of their own responsibility in all that. And those who never turned up at the elections, I see them as stinkers, you're not aware of it yet you had been running away, that's some sort of escapism – 'I don't know what's going on'.

**And who should open their eyes?**

Well, government. Authorities in charge, Natasa Kandic and the rest of them, they should tell the truth – this is how it had been, this and this, and not oppress and harass her. So, there was this this and this, the facts should be precisely established on both sides. I don't know how good that is for reconciliation, but it's good for the nation's redemption. Be aware of what you have been doing.

**And in the current situation, do you see facing the past as an obligation or a necessity for another reason?**

As an obligation – to oneself. How to look at yourself in the mirror when you wake up in the morning. I'm to blame for this this and this. As an obligation.

**Do you see any obstacles to this?**

Oh, there are as many as you like! Let's not go into politics....

**What is it that keeps us from reconciling before 2050?**

There's a lot of bad blood still around. It's all still fresh. Some time should pass, first of all. I think time is the key factor, only then comes determining who'd killed how many people and how. But that too, the responsible ones hiding, that should be cleared out, urgently. And they should be sentenced, tried, it has to be done urgently, and then we can move on. Because these governments in

both Croatia and Serbia, it's like they're courting the nationalist public opinion. They see them off with some kind of honours (to the Hague). One should distance oneself from that sort of politics. They were bad, now we're here doing something else, now the people supports us – meaning they're not just as stupid as they had been, they got a bit smarter.

### **What can an individual do?**

To ask themselves what they have been doing for all those years. To wonder how it had been since the start, when the instigation started, in 89, 90, to wonder what their mental outlook had been like, under the influence of it. So, to start an introspection, to go chronologically through the entire course of how all that had developed in them, all that ugly period – starting with 88, 89 – until today, and to see where they'd gone wrong. So when they meet a member of another nation afterwards, there will be no bad blood. And if they start running away and going 'you're to blame for this and that', 'you started it', 'you wanted to banish Serbs, just like Hitler before you', 'Croats are bad', 'Croats had Jasenovac', it's the same pile of shit, Croats and Serbs and Muslims, the primitive tribes. Jasenovac would've happened on the other side too had the constellation of historic events been different, I'm sure of it. And those excuses of 'you started it, we had to defend ourselves' etc... One should go back to the start and then go through all this again with this experience under one's belt.

### **Should one forget?**

Of course not.

### **And forgive?**

Forgive who? I personally, for instance, have nothing to forgive anyone. Nor does anyone have anything to forgive me, so I don't know. Now, all my experiences are 'from the sides'. All that had been happening somewhere nearby, but not to me personally, so I don't know how competent I am to discuss it; no one close to me had been killed nor have I done anything to anybody, so, as far as I'm concerned, I'd marry a Croat woman tomorrow... or an Albanian one.

### **What's our future together?**

Our future together? Well, in the European Union (*laughter*)! I don't know, there'll always be some rivalry there: 'Dinamo', 'Cibona', 'Partizan', 'Zvezda'... And we'll be something like the Turks and the Greeks! That's it, but we'll cooperate, there'll be Croats among my friends and I'll be their friend too etc. It'll be alright, the world's moving towards the better (*laughter*). Two hundred years ago, a woman who now may be a Nobel prize winner sat at the stove, so that two hundred years from now we won't fight each other either, we'll all be smiling, happy

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## Public Forum "Four views" in Bosnia and Herzegovina

*November – December 2004*

Three public forums "Four Views: From the Past – How I Found Myself In War; Towards the Future – How To Reach Sustainable Peace?" that were held in Nevesinje, Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje and Sarajevo in November and December of 2004, were (the way things look right now) the last ones in a three-year long line of 14 forums that we implemented thus far.

The selection of places where the forums were going to take place was done according to the following principle – we would organize a forum in the town where we found truly motivated local partners, but with our great desire to:

- a) reach small and closed communities that in a way offer a micro-picture of the war that was going on in Bosnia and Herzegovina; that are outside of main media, cultural as well as political happenings. We wanted to "set" Nevesinje and Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje on the media map when it comes to peace initiatives, thus even partly, tearing down the cliché according to which those communities are mentioned only when an incident occurs (usually an inter-ethnic one).
- b) finally try to organize the forum in Sarajevo, which is not only media and political centre of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also has quite a special place in this region when it comes to the story about crimes and dishonour of the wars of the nineties. We are satisfied with different levels of cooperation to a different extent – from a truly constructive and very empowering cooperation with local partners and participants of the forums to a more or less partial satisfaction with cooperation with media, local authorities and veterans' associations.

### **Public Forum in Nevesinje, 19.11.2004.**

The first one in this series of forums in Bosnia and Herzegovina was held on November 19, 2004, in Nevesinje, in the local Municipal Hall premises. Participants of the forum were: Novica Kostić from Vlasotince, Serbia (former reserve soldier of the Yugoslav Army), Nermin Karačić from Sarajevo (former member of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina), Marko Martinić from Split, Croatia (ex-soldier of Croatian Army) and Vojo Vuković from Nevesinje (former combatant of the Army of the Republic of Srpska).

With the help of Boris Avram from Info-Centre Nevesinje, who was our local partner and the participant of last year's program of Training for Trainers, and one other participant of the forum, also from Nevesinje, there was a chance to organize this forum and publicly discuss some painful issues.

The attendance of the event was very good. There were young people in the audience who could identify with the participants both because of their age and participation in the war, but there were middle aged and elderly people also who all had in common the fact that most of them were carrying

arms during the war. We are very sorry that there was no one from the veterans' associations or representatives of the local authorities, although they all declared their support and greeted the organisation of the forum in Nevesinje.

Although there weren't that many questions from the audience, it was very valuable that the people from the audience needed to talk to the participants afterwards and share some of their dilemmas regarding the war.

#### **Public Forum in Gornji Vakuf – Uskoplje, 30.11.2004.**

Public forum "Four Views" was held on November 30, 2004, in Gornji Vakuf – Uskoplje in the local post office. Participants of the forum were: Nermin Karačić from Sarajevo (former member of Special Forces of the Interior Ministry and the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina), Dževad Budimlić from Sisak, Croatia (ex-member of Croatian Army), Vojo Vuković from Nevesinje (ex member of the Army of the Republic of Srpska) and Marko Martinić from Split (former member of the Croatian Army).

Participant's presentations related to their motives to go to war and their views of peace building were much more clearly presented than on this round's first panel which had taken place in Nevesinje. While listening to their discussions, one could feel the fear and sorrow that war brings along and that any combatant could identify, regardless of the army they had once belonged to.

Although we were a bit afraid that no one would come to the forum because of the context of the divided town, the auditorium was full of women, men, both young and elderly, who were listening attentively. One could feel certain heaviness because of the avoidance to tell the story even though the shooting had long ended. Just like someone from the audience wrote: "Gunfire has stopped in our town, but the war still continues."

After the end of the forum, people from the audience came up to the participants and offered them their support.

#### **Public Forum in Sarajevo, 11.12.2004.**

On December 11, the last of this year's "Four Views" forums in Bosnia and Herzegovina took place in the Main Auditorium of the Police Centre, in Sarajevo. It was at the same time the last one of the three-year long cycle that had started in 2002. The forum was held in cooperation with the Centre for Education and Training from Sarajevo.

Participants of the forum were: Marko Martinić, from Split, Croatia, Amer Delić from Zavidovići, Vojo Vuković from Nevesinje and Nermin Karačić from Sarajevo, all three in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Moderator of the forum was Alma Mašić.

Although we were supported by different media, institutions, some veteran's associations and



others, it was clear to us that there were certain power circles that did not consider the kind of event that we promoted was in their best interest, while some of them simply did not find it interesting.

The Main Auditorium of the Police Centre was filled with people of different age and identities, including former combatants, representatives of the Association of the Families of Missing and Dead, activists... Although some visitors commented and offered support to both the idea and the need to talk about it, a certain, smaller number of visitors was loud enough to create an atmosphere in which many others could neither say what they were bothered with nor were able, with their questions and comments, to turn the discussion to some other direction, that would not come out of the need to "confirm" who was the aggressor and to hear about participants honoraria, but towards the wider theme about what we could do together to change something.

## Public Forum with ex-combatants in Vienna

On June 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2005, we visited Vienna, Austria. Our friend Wolfgang Weilharter and Evangelische Akademie Wien organised a public forum with ex-combatants from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Speakers were participants of some of the previous forums that had been held in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro: Nermin Karačić from Sarajevo (was in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, from 1992-95), Vojo Vuković from Nevesinje (was in the Army of the Republic of Srpska, from 1992-96) and Gordan Bodog from Zagreb, member of Croatian Army, from 1991-94. CNA team member, Sanja Deanković, facilitated the forum.

Along with the forum which took place in the Evangelist Academy premises (Albert Schweitzer Haus), a one-day workshop was held the following day. Together with the speakers of the forum, two CNA team members, Nedžad Horozović and Adnan Hasanbegović, took part at the workshop and had a chance to present our work in more detail, keeping a focus on the activities regarding dealing with the past and work with veterans from the region of former Yugoslavia. Participants of the forum were peace activists from Austria and Germany as well as persons from former Yugoslavia who live in Vienna. The workshop was held in Sigismund Freud Museum, attended by about 30 guests.

The idea to hold the forum and the workshop was carried out as an initiative of Wolfgang Weilharter, who had spent several weeks visiting CNA Sarajevo office in 2004, and had become very interested in our work and our approach to the theme of dealing with the past. Through the series of talks and meetings an idea occurred to organise a public forum in Vienna, like those that had been held in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro, since there's many people from this region who live in Vienna and Austria (refugees and immigrants) and that peace activists and Austrian media showed an interest in such an event.

The forum in Vienna was very well attended, not just by people from former Yugoslavia, but also by many Austrians. The atmosphere was at some moments tense, primarily because of the relations amongst the persons in the audience that belonged to different ethnic groups. Their comments were burdened with different views of war events and there were emotionally charged remarks coming from people who had lost their family members in the war and fled to Austria as refugees.

Both local people and people from the region of former Yugoslavia had many questions for the speakers of the forum. Quite a good number of them were formulated in a provocative and biased manner in the sense of "our" and "your" side, but there were also lot of constructive ones that opened up space for the answers that enabled the event to be held in a good atmosphere. One might



really say that the forum was held in a milieu that gives a realistic picture of the situation in which the inter-ethnic relations amongst Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks are now, still very much burdened with prejudice and war traumas. As a result of that mutual accusations and apostrophizes were exchanged, between the people from the audience and addressed to the speakers, too. It is interesting that the relations amongst different groups in Austria are very much copy of the same problematic relationship that exists at home.

We realised that this was our first experience of a public forum with the «mixed» public, since all the previous forums had been held in more or less ethnically homogenous communities where the majority of audience was either Serbs or Bosniaks, etc. The concept of the forum worked quite well, and the participants were dealing with the difficult questions and the atmosphere in the room in a good manner, contributing to reduction of prejudices about former combatants as warmongering

nationalists. It was interesting to see that Austrians and Austrian media showed quite an interest in both the forum and the workshop that was held the following day. The organization of the forum as well as all the technicalities regarding the workshop, accommodation, etc. were very well done and we use this opportunity to thank Wolfgang and all the other people and organizations for the implementation of this event.

During the previous year (September 2004 – September 2005) both CNA offices organized several networking meetings for peace activists from different parts of the region of former Yugoslavia. We intentionally focused our meetings on networking and connecting people within smaller regions-states in order to contribute to strengthening local initiatives and capacities for peace work and to stimulate ad hoc reactions to different kind of violence and discrimination in certain smaller communities-regions, which is a little untypical for our approach, very much oriented to regional work in the entire region of former Yugoslavia.

The first in the series of meetings was held in Belgrade, on November 27-28, 2004. It gathered a group of about 15 activists from Vojvodina, with a basic idea to form a nucleus of a future informal activist group prepared to react in a timely fashion to an increasingly tense situation in that region and to frequent outbursts of inter-ethnic intolerance, portrayed as minor incidents “that could not endanger life together and traditional tolerance in a multicultural Vojvodina” by most of the influential media and state institutions.

The meeting which was organized with the minimum of resources, but with a high level of motivation and enthusiasm of both the organizers and participants, produced some tangible results in a very short time - many actions of the group called “REACT” that won the support of certain media and a major part of public throughout Vojvodina. (You can find more about the actions of the group “REACT” in another article, which is a part of this report.)

The next networking meeting was held in Kočani, Macedonia (from March 04 - 08, 2005), for people involved in the area of peace building in the triangle of Macedonia—Serbia—Kosovo. This meeting had somewhat different goals and focus than the one for Vojvodina. We are completely aware of the fact that the territory that the meeting covered is much wider and more complex regarding its problems, therefore we didn’t set concrete action that would result from the meeting to be our goal (although they are always welcome), but instead, it was for people from the triangle to get to know each other, to empower them and to explore possibilities to work in the field of dealing with the past in Kosovo and Macedonia. We saw this meeting as a good opportunity to intensify our peace engagement and visibility in the “southern triangle” of our region, having in mind that all the activities in dealing with the past during the previous three years had been focused on the triangle “Serbia-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia”.

The group called “regional peace council” was formed after this meeting. Their most concrete action until now has been to organize a group of activists from Serbia and Macedonia to visit Kosovo.

This year’s last networking meeting was organized in Bosnia, in Travnik (from August 19-22, 2005) for people active in the field of peace building in different parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was designed to be an open space for exchange and reflection, halfway between the meeting and training. A three-day event was, according to the information obtained from participants, a great chance for (self) empowerment and remembrance that nothing is as stimulating for motivation for peace work as sharing activists’ energy and enthusiasm within the group of different people, who



have different priorities in their peace work, but have a common value standpoint. Even when the unavoidable question is pending "How to work, how to change?" Although we regret having so many cancellations on such short notice, and rather a small group (13 persons) there's also a great satisfaction with what has been accomplished, which is greatly reinforced by the first fruits of a three-day long work (initiative for organizing a workshop about dealing with the past in Bratunac, that came from one of the participants and which will be implemented by CNA Sarajevo and QPSW).

Three meetings with the same final goal, but with different expected results and focus showed that this type of activity is very useful with respect to bringing people tighter together, for support and exchange of ideas and inspiration amongst people who remain distant from one another and without true exchange of information, even though they often work in the same region (or even town). That's why it is necessary to have this kind of meetings from time to time, to remind us all, amongst other things, that cooperation, despite the frequent feeling that most of the activists have, doesn't have to be just a dead letter.

## Workshop on trauma

*Sarajevo, 13 - 15.10.2004.*

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Sarajevo office organised a three-day seminar/workshop on the theme of "Trauma and How to recognise it in the Work with Groups". The workshop took place on October 13–15, and it gathered seven CNA team members from Sarajevo and Belgrade as well as three people from Podgorica, Herceg Novi and Nevesinje.

The workshops covered the following themes: o Introduction to the trauma (how to recognise biological, psychological, social and spiritual consequences of trauma)

- How to deal with the trauma in work with groups; what are the limits to the trainer's responsibility while working with such groups; how can a professional who is not a psychologist help people in recognising trauma?
- Recognising one's own trauma - how to deal with difficult issues and avoid secondary traumatism?

Members of MCC Sarajevo designed the concept of this three day training in cooperation with CNA team, in order to respond as much as possible to the needs that came out of several years of work with people from the region of former Yugoslavia, and especially with the population of ex-combatants.

## Training for Teachers for the Children's Home "Gazaz"

*Sarajevo, January 04 - 07, 2005*

From January 3 - 7, 2005, Centre for Education and Training (CET) organized a five-day training for teachers in the premises of the Children's Home "Gazaz" in Sarajevo. There were 18 women present (2 of which joined the group later) and one man, and one of the trainers was CNA team member, Adnan Hasanbegović. The training was held on an initiative of the management of "Gazaz" aiming to establish better relations within the institution and to improve teamwork and teacher's capacities for their work with children. "Gazaz" is a seminary and a school for children who lost one or both parents. It's also an Islamic institution, which has greatly determined the concept of the training and the work method.

The following themes were covered: nonviolent communication, team work, decision making, understanding of conflicts, violence and national identity.

The training additionally indicates that there's a need to work with Muslim man and women as well as with Islamic organisations in the context of their social responsibility in Bosnia and Herzegovina, because it's not unusual that those circles send out the messages of hate and xenophobia. This kind of education may empower nonviolent aspect of their social engagement.

## **Workshops with policepersons in Bosna and Herzegovina**

### ***Workshop with policepersons in Žepče***

As a part of the project named "Police Work in the Community and the Security of the Community", the Department for International Development organized two, two-day training events on the theme of communication and relations with clients that took place in Žepče, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first training was held on May 27 and 28, and the second one was on May 30 and 31.

The first group of participants consisted of 10 participants, 5 of which were policemen from Žepče and 4 were policewomen from Zenica.

In the second group, there were 6 policemen from Žepče and 4 from Zenica. Participants of the event were policemen and policewomen who get in contact with citizens through their work, on daily basis. The members of the facilitating team were: our colleague Sanja Deanković and Melina Sadiković, psychologist from Sarajevo.

During the first day of the training, interactive methods were used to cover constructive and non-constructive communication as well as techniques of "I speech", open and closed questions, active listening, paraphrasing. On the second day of the seminar to treat the elements that influence communication with other people, which we're often not aware of, like the following: prejudices, unconscious labelling, ignoring the conversationalist or impetuous pandering.

After both of those training events, participants articulated their need for further education concerning communication as well as that dedicated to enhancement of team work, which would be attended by all members of police force, regardless of their position in the hierarchy.

### ***Workshops in Prijedor with policepersons and local authorities***

Following the two trainings in Žepča, two one day workshops were held in Prijedor, in Pensioners' home, on August 26 and 27, for policemen/women and persons working in state management. The trainings were organised by Prijedor Office – Department for International Development, and the subject was communication and clients relations. Both groups were consisted of participants who are police officers and clerks employed in the municipality and Center for Social work and who work in direct contact with clients. There were 12 participants in one group and 13 in the other. The trainings were lead by our colleagues Sanja Deanković and Melina Sadiković, a psychologist from Sarajevo.

As was the case at two previous trainings in Žepča, the communication techniques and situations that participants experience as communication difficulties at work were the subjects of the training. At both trainings, during the second, afternoon, part, with the subject of elements that can influence communication with other people, elements we're often not even aware of (such as prejudices, labeling...), the need arose within the group of a more general talk about the subject of national and ethnic prejudices as well as that of violence stemming from their not being questioned and being taken for granted, as well as how all this influences our relations with people/clients. Almost entire afternoon session in both groups was dedicated to this subject.

The trainers' team noticed a certain lack of motivation to participate in the discussion and lack of criticism for one's own work. The question remains of how to deal with a not so rare situation when we face the group that was 'sent to a training' with no real motivation to take an active part and to contribute the shared work on a given subject.

A significant lesson from these Prijedor workshops was the fact that the organisers of the education needed to insist more on examining the real needs of the group and their interests in order to conceive the workshop programme according to these parameters.

## **Workshop with postgraduates from the University of Oxford**

Sarajevo, May 26 2005

Centre for Nonviolent Action Sarajevo office hosted a workshop on violence with the group of 11 postgraduates from the University of Oxford.

The workshop was facilitated by our colleagues: Adnan Hasanbegović and Sanja Deanković, and it was organized to demonstrate methodology we use in our peace education programmes. At the same time it was the segment of the presentation of work of Centre for Nonviolent Action that we had started two days earlier.

# ACTIVITIES OF OUR PARTNERS

## 'REACT!' group – Grupa REAGUJ!

Nine months have passed from the time the CNA organised a regional meeting and assembled people from Vojvodina. It was then, on the last weekend of November 2004, that the group 'React!' was formed, the group that has done a lot during that time. But let's take things one step at the time. Where has the need to assemble people from Vojvodina come from?

### *About the need*

This meeting stemmed from our wish to support people who have been through our activities (by which we primarily mean the trainings), as well from our need to encourage and stimulate people to react to daily violence in our environments, particularly the one between nations.

We have long thought about how to support people from our trainings. We have decided to organise meetings of people on the bases of regions. The decision for the first meeting to be held with people from Vojvodina is based on daily-political problems increasingly coloured by nationalism, and violence in general in Vojvodina, with very few reacting to it. Worried by increasing violence, we want there to be reaction against hatred and inter-ethnic intolerance. The voices condemning this violence are low and insufficient, and the state institutions pay almost no attention at all.

### *The meeting*

At the first meeting, we talked about how we see the problems in Vojvodina, which problems these are, what can be done about them, what capacities we have in terms of dealing with them, what we can and will do. That's when the first action had been conceived, the one to be carried out three weeks later under the title of 'Take violence off the wall!', and it was agreed that the people behind it will be the ones to take part at the meeting, under the group title of 'React!'. This has been a novel experience to us – how to motivate people, empower them to take action, plan along with them, and this meeting showed we could indeed do it.

### *Activities*

The group 'React!' proclaimed the day of its first action to be the Day Against Violence in Vojvodina, November 18 2004. In many towns of Vojvodina, the graffiti were painted over and flyers were distributed with the message of 'I don't want anyone out! We're all Vojvodina' (in all languages in use in Vojvodina), as a reaction to frequent messages of the graffiti, such as 'Get out of here!', 'Get out of Serbia' etc, mostly referring to minority national groups in Vojvodina.

The action took place on November 18 at 12 noon in the following towns: Novi Sad, Kikinda, Zrenjanin, Subotica, Novi Becej, Vrbas, Pancevo, Backa Palanka, Vrsac.

After this initial action, we saw that a lot can be done, which gave us the enthusiasm to carry on. For that reason, we organised the next meeting in Novi Becej (organised by a member of 'React!' group), at which we evaluated the previous action but also agreed on how to continue. A lot has been done since: a statement was forwarded on the occasion of March 17, anniversary of escalation of Violence

in Kosovo, a performance 'Good Land' was shown in Kikinda, Novi Becej (...)

The particularly important action of painting over fascist graffiti in Zrenjanin lasted for a month, and involved a rather large number of people from non-government organisations, town government, parties. The group 'React!' later had its presentation, a stall at Exit festival, where people had the opportunity to be informed about the work of the group and also to fill out the survey forms about the social conditions in Vojvodina. The results of the survey are yet to be processed. We wish to note that we have also produced t-shirts with the message 'I don't want anyone to go out of here! We are all Vojvodina' printed in all languages in use in Vojvodina, in order to make this message as visible as possible, and distributed them to the members of "React!" group as well as to people who took active part in the Exit action.

In mid July, women activists of 'React!' group organized a panel discussion entitled 'Srebrenica 10 years later - facing the crime', held in the hall of Zrenjanin Municipality, followed by Women In Black Standing in the central town square. This is the first such activity related to Srebrenica and facing the past held on the premises of the Town Hall and with support of the town government. Ian Campbell, secretary for political affairs of the US Embassy in Belgrade, Alexandra Milenov, coordinator of the Hague Tribunal Office; Nenad Canak; Janja Bec Norman, a sociologist nominated for Nobel Peace Prize; Nebojsa Popov, editor in chief of Republika magazine; mothers from the enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa, Kada and Zumra; Divna Stankovic, Women in Black, and Nada Dabic, Esperanca, Women in Black, took part at the discussion.

All these events are regularly published in 'Tolerance', an equal collaborator in all these activities.

The group also has its program on 'Kojot' Radio in Zrenjanin, on which it works independently, and the action 'Let's Take Violence Off The Walls' was scheduled for World Peace Day, on September 1st 2005, entailing painting over graffiti inspiring violence, discrimination, racism, fascism and xenophobia, in a synchronised manner in all participating towns. The towns to take part in this action are: Novi Sad, Pancevo, Zrenjanin, Subotica, Sombor, Novi Becej, Kikinda, Belgrade, Cacak, Podgorica, Niksic, Zagreb, Rijeka, Skopje, Prilep and Biograd, and collaborators from Hungary, the UK, Germany, Switzerland, Burkina Faso, Ireland, Sweden and Norway also joined in.

And finally, something that would describe the group 'React!' (Reaguj) and its work the best is the following:

- R – Reaguj (React)
- E – Energično (Energetically)
- A – Aktivistički (Activist)
- G – Građanski (Civil)
- U – Ukaži na nasilje! (Point out the violence!)
- J – Javno ga osudi! (Condemn it publicly!)

## The Meeting of Peace Associations and Veterans' Associations

Selce, Croatia, April 6-9 2005

From April 6-9, 2005, the second meeting of activists of several peace, human rights and veterans' associations from Croatia was held in the "Varaždin" hotel in the town of Selci, near Rijeka, Croatia. Several guests from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina also attended the meeting. It was a part of the initiative on the theme of peace engagement of former combatants and their contribution to peace building in Croatia and in the territory of former Yugoslavia, which was organized by QPSW and CMS (Centre for Peace Studies) – Zagreb. Milan Colić from CNA Belgrade office and Adnan Hasanbegović from CNA Sarajevo office had a chance to take part at the event and present our experiences in work with veterans and in the field of dealing with the past on this three-day meeting with workshop concept.

The group of participants gathered about 30 activists coming from several peace organizations, associations of Croatian defenders and organizations of families of the missing persons.

We believe that this meeting was an important event in the context of peace building both in Croatia and in a wider region, and that our participation and presentation of our work contributed to the goals of the gathering.

The meeting additionally indicated to the importance of the role and responsibility of veterans in post-war societies of former Yugoslavia.

More details about the initiative is available on the following e-mail address: [qpsw@zamir.net](mailto:qpsw@zamir.net)

## *Context of Peace Work in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

*by Tamara Šmidling*

Ten years after the end of the war and the ratification of the Dayton Peace Agreement, citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina are facing the whole bunch of old and new problems:

- Entirely uncertain future status of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a state (several options are being mentioned: Bosnia and Herzegovina without entities, but with cantons; two entities; three entities; none of the above mentioned but something completely different?);
- Increasingly difficult economic situation and devastated industry whose weakness affects, as always, population from the social margins. Introduction of additional value tax (AVT) which was announced was the subject of fierce political battle that had been going on between those in power and the opposition in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is symptomatic that those who oppose the implementation of AVT on basic groceries are always in opposition. No matter what political party or coalition is in power at any given moment, you can resist to the instructions of IMF or international community in Bosnia, only if you don't take any part in decision making. That tells us a lot about the "sovereignty" of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- Ethnic division that permeates all the areas of life (the latest "hit" is suspension of the unfortunate "schools under one roof" and introduction of separate schools in different buildings, just in case, in order to forestall the children of different ethnicity to get in touch with one another and eventually start hanging out and communicating normally);
- Increase/metastasis of criminal has multiple malignant effects – it erodes the last settings of what seems to be the state of the law, endangers the feeling of security and safety with most people, with one "positive" effect – it constantly mocks empty phrases of local politicians and representatives of so called international community about the capability and readiness of the institutions of system to adequately respond to the challenges of the organized crime;
- "Ghosts" of the recent past that are lurking from every corner, tightening the noose around those who have been considered the untouchables, until not so long ago (Ismet Bajramović Čelo, Momčilo Mandić and others). Although many important players in the political life of this country pretend not to see it, while they are busy trying to remain in power for another month or a year, with the help of shallow pseudo-democratic and pseudo-European rhetoric, or are consumed with the hectic attempts to impute at least one of "their" crimes to each one of "ours" ...

And so one, and on...

Whoever accepts to write about something that is called seemingly simple and precise "the context of peace work in Bosnia and Herzegovina" in the period of time between September last year and this one, risks to fall into the trap of constant repetition of some rigid assessments and views of everyday life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Firstly, guided by our feeling and daily dose of frustration, regularly delivered in media and in every contact with so called institutions and establishment, it is easy to say something like: "Well, Bosnia is falling apart", "It's a disaster here", "Hate and theft still rule", "Human rights exist only on paper" and so on. Secondly, though not less important, by saying some of

the previously stated sentences, you will not make too big a mistake. And you'll have a clear conscience, and if there's someone to object, they should support their opinion with an example that proves otherwise. So, since there's not too small and very well paid group of politicians, international experts, journalists, etc. that is willing to concordantly croak every once in a while about the bright and definite future for Bosnia and Herzegovina (all that is bad is the fault of the "others", anyway), why shouldn't there be a group of people, volunteers by the way, who will be able to say out loud that everything's a disaster – period!

There's a problem, however, in one small detail, – if all of that is said/written by someone who considers themselves a peace activist, with a several years of experience in that field, then we're faced with the a paradox which is not at all naive: what is the purpose and impact of peace work in the country where nothing has changed for years, and the situation remains tragic forever?

Possible answers to that question usually go towards two different directions: one is to make up everyday life and overall situation and take over credits for so called progress which cannot be seen anywhere but in the reports to donors ("it was terrible, but then we came and made reconciliation, built trust, etc").

The other way which has been known for a long time is famous whining, that do give a true picture without glittering aura, but implicitly brings along message that says : "if only there was more people like us, who really understood problems". Understood without a move. There's no mention of work, action, idea or vision for the future. As if understanding and generously sharing it with anyone who's ready to listen is the maximum of what can be done. That's where the essential, ethical problem of this approach lies – it simply loses its power and stops in the moment when it's necessary to look oneself in the eye and say – what's next, what do you suggest? With all the risk of making a mistake, misjudge the situation as well as our limitations and capacities, let's try to choose the option of action, movement and flow and then see what's our perspective and how we experience the society we live in.

And, one other crucial thing: in order to be able to call our words criticism, which is often aspired to but hardly accomplished, we, peace and NGO activists should engage, at least part of our capacities for criticism to criticize our own position in this society, and towards perception of the disconcerting picture that exists about the nongovernmental organizations. Will we still pretend that the bad image doesn't exist or even better, ignore it as a result of acting of those who are "backwards and bigots"?

Readiness to take over responsibility for something more than mere noticing that we're just about to fail, as well as the strength to start creating fresh and constructive picture of what peace activism really is – that's what context of peace work in Bosnia and Herzegovina misses the most... And there are enough problems and there will be, no worries.

## ***Croatia***

*by Sanja Deanković*

This September too we will look back on several significant events that have marked the reality in Croatia in the past year.

Apart from winning the majority of votes at state level, the governing HDZ won a fair number of votes and parliament seat at this year's local elections in May. A particularly interesting data is that the majority is reclaimed in the very parts of Croatia that have been by affected by the war the most

severely, and that the same people who were in service of certain ideologies inspiring all the warfare events and all the horrors have now regained power. The results of local elections were almost exactly copied results of elections at state level of two years ago.

Several months after the elections, the ghosts of the past have been stirred by the new protected witness who has decided to speak about the atrocious tortures and killing of Serbs at the beginning of the nineties in Osijek, following orders of the person the very citizens of this town and County granted their prevailing support at the previous elections. The news created a big boom in Croatian media, but hasn't caused any significantly disturbed reactions of the Croatian public, the only reaction being an ominous silence.

It's interesting that another action was taking place at about the same time, in which citizens participated wholeheartedly and reacted, through their votes and actions, to the evil committed against the weak and the powerless. Namely, information and rebellion of the citizens pointed out to the problem of abuse of beagle dogs at the Zagreb Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, where the reactions of citizens, various associations and organizations alarmed the police and court officials, leading to the major initiators of these sickening experiments being arrested and replaced in several days, which is highly commendable.

This was the real example of how a legal state should actually operate. This action indicated the citizens' awareness that the word and action can really start a non violent action and that injustice can be acted against. The question remains of why such actions do not exist when it comes to condemning crimes against the Serbs during the war in Croatia and condemning discrimination that still exists against people who have returned to the East of Slavonia and in the areas of Knin and Drnis. Does that mean that we are only prepared to take non violent actions when it is not a political issue and that a large majority of Croatian public silently agrees to legitimization of crimes against people whose only crime is to be of 'wrong' nationality and that they simply don't have equal rights in the country they have been living in for generations?

This Summer, on August 5, to be precise, the tenth anniversary of military-police action 'Oluja' (Storm) was celebrated, the action characterized as criminal by the Hague Tribunal this year. The central celebration took place in Knin, the town that is one of the most obvious examples of national and ethnic divisions and intolerance. The speeches of high state officials once again supported the social consensus present in the Croatian public about the holy and non-questionable values of the defense Homeland war in which we were the victims of aggression and merely defended ourselves, whereas it was individuals who, out of their criminal and vindictive motives, killed, robbed and looted and should be condemned, but that's also a certain step forward. Still, in a covert and non-transparent way, the part of events that are not in favor of honors of a major victory was talked about.

One of the most wanted indicted of the Hague in the region, the retired general Ante Gotovina, is still on the loose, which is not much of the news, but Croatia is getting ever further from the beginning of negotiations for accession to the European Union, announced at the beginning of the year. The general on the run received the public support from the ecclesial circles who have been pretending not to see the crimes committed by Croatian army ever since the beginning of the war and through its silence and resignation supported the governing policy of 'humane relocation' of the other and different, not defining its stance on crimes against all moral and religious principles of what they were supposed to be preaching. According to the latest data, around 50 000 people have returned to Croatia, but the majority of these are the elderly or people who haven't managed to realize their right to property, but do not in fact live there, and those who have actually returned are completely excluded from social-political life and there is simply nothing for them to do in local government

and administration and are constantly exposed to everyday pressures and discrimination. Regardless of the fact that affirmative calls to return and inter-regional cooperation keep coming from the highest levels of the state, the climate and atmosphere of extreme nationalism having been created for more than a decade by the very same HDZ political option simply can't be changed overnight, so that all statements remain mere rhetoric that vanishes into thin air, with continual failure to react to discrimination and slighting and are thus silently being complicit in covering the violence by institutions and ordinary citizens.

And us, the citizens, where are we in all that? For the time being, we do not support the ethnical cleansing ( the linguistic syntagma of such ominous ring that we are always ready to condemn) while we comfortably sit back in our homes and, preoccupied with our own existence, turn a blind eye to what has been happening in our neighbourhood, whilst nothing can be more efficient in preventing evil than the public opinion itself, formed by each one of us in particular.

## ***Macedonia***

*by Gordana Pirkovska Zmijanac*

Referendum on territorial division, local elections for mayors and advisors in the local self government, as well as many scandals with protagonists like Vraniškovski, Raštanski Lozja, Ljube Boškovski... marked the past 12 months in Macedonia.

In 2004, the World Macedonian Congress together with several opposition parties that were dissatisfied with the new Law on Territorial Division reacted to it with an initiative for a referendum on new territorial division. On the other hand, the ruling parties claimed that the law was the only right solution which was going to take us quicker towards the Euro-Atlantic integrations. Political representatives of ethnic-Albanians threatened that they would not accept referendum and that they would counteract Macedonian referendum with the Albanian one. For Macedonians that was just another proof that Albanians accepted only the policies of pressure and blackmail, while the Albanians took referendum as a political message that Macedonians didn't want to live together with them. The authorities kept claiming that Macedonia would be destabilized if the referendum succeeded. Macedonian president Branko Crvenkovski called upon citizens to boycott and ignore the referendum, just a few days before the vote. His conduct caused great revolt and condemnation, because it was a direct contest of citizens' democratic rights. The atmosphere of mistrust and fear between two biggest ethnic communities was thriving at the time. Some commented that nothing would be the same after the referendum in Macedonia, that de-stabilization of the country was inevitable... Referendum did not succeed, and soon afterwards it was followed by the fourth local elections. So, in March and April 2005 and even during the actual election process, all we could hear was discrediting of political opponents instead of some sustainable strategies for development of decentralized government.

Those were the first local elections which were supposed to ensure functioning of the local authorities in the decentralized conditions, namely the first one with the new territorial division. For Albanian candidates, it was a chance to get supervision in more municipalities and, in general, more authority for mayors as well as bigger funds, which were the reasons why the whole process was treated as if it was the parliamentary elections.

Decentralization should really provide better response to the needs and interests of the citizens as well as better protection of human rights and liberties. But, keeping in mind that the local elections were guided by party interests and not those of the citizens, which was accompanied by a series of

inconsistencies in the electoral process (forgery, intimidation, ballot-box stuffing, ballot-box destroying, gender misbalance, pressures, compromise of secrecy of the ballot, buying out the entire villages, no reaction in some cases...) – it is quite unbelievable that the aim of decentralization would be achieved. Elections were observed by numerous domestic and foreign monitors, while the representatives of the European Union sent warnings and appeals for peaceful, democratic and fair process, which was a precondition for Macedonia to get the candidate status for membership in the European Union.

There were 379 candidates for mayors and 446 lists of advisors in 84 municipalities and in the city of Skoplje. Coalition "For Macedonia", United Opposition and DUI (Democratic Union for Integration) won the biggest number of mayors' positions. Independent candidate Trifun Kostovski was elected for the mayor of Skoplje, with support of United Opposition which won the most of the mayors' positions in Skoplje municipalities. 16 candidates were elected into City Council of Skoplje, most of which were from the list of the Coalition "For Macedonia" and the United Opposition, while DUI and DPA (Democratic Party of Albanians in Macedonia) and PDP (Party for Democratic Prosperity) - two parties of ethnic-Albanians won 3 positions each.

Now, after the local elections, the ordeal of decentralization has begun. It came out at the open that Macedonia is not ready for a true decentralization, while the central government did not fulfill its obligations with respect to transfer of authorities and resources, which meant that the municipalities faced a series of problems like for example the enormous debts and blocked funds.

One of many cases that caused quite a stir in the public was the case of the former archbishop of the Povardarje Eparchy, Jovan Vraniškovski. Relations between Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC) and Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC) suddenly deteriorated after three Macedonian archbishops supported so called "Niš Declaration". According to the declaration, MOC was supposed to change its name and go back to the autonomous status within the SOC. After being faced with a severe reaction of domestic public, two archbishops "repented", while archbishop Jovan didn't and he accepted the canonic unity with SOC. In response to that, church authorities from Skoplje literally exiled archbishop Jovan from his eparchy in Veles. The Holy Synod of SOC pronounced Jovan as an exarch of the Serbian Patriarch Pavle in Macedonia. Taken by surprise, the Holy Synod of MOC, rejected the decision from Belgrade and decided that they would cease negotiations with SOC unless The Patriarchy from Belgrade take back all their decisions regarding the appointing of the administrator in Macedonia. They also decided that Jovan should be trialed in front of both the church and the state court. Therefore, he was sentenced to imprisonment for his attempt to establish a parallel orthodox church in Macedonia, for causing religious hatred and embezzlement of 200.000 € that belonged to the church. Helsinki Committee for Human Rights accused the state for obstruction of religious rights and freedom, interference in relations between churches and protection of only one religion and for the courts' dependency and bias.

The overall atmosphere in the country is depressing, economy is sinking and people not seem to trust anybody. Members of all ethnic groups say that they have seen them both (Macedonian political parties: Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) and Alliance of Democratic Forces in Macedonia (SDSM) and parties of ethnic-Albanians: PDP, DPA and DUI) and that they are all the same, no good and the only thing that makes them different is the size of their pocket. Scandals break out on daily bases, just like cases of violation of human rights for which no one accepts responsibility. For instance, several cases of pedophilia have been discovered in some schools in a short period of time, and it turned out that the professors either suspected it or kept silent, and nobody reacted for years!

## **Montenegro**

*by Radomir Radević*

What seems to have been established in Montenegro in the past year as a sort of a generally accepted trend is an orientation towards the future, towards the future European Montenegro, and we can't seem to shake off the impression that this very trend is yet another way to repress the past events and an already usual, apparently, procrastination in commencing the process of facing the past. The government of Montenegro, first of all, but the entire public either, haven't been inspired to take that step, if not ultimate, then certainly a crucial one, even by private charges being pressed against the state of Montenegro by the families of Muslims deported from Montenegro, people who had been arrested by the members of Montenegro police and sent back to Bosnia straight to Radovan Karadzic (a case in which, apart from Ministry of Interior of Montenegro, who knows which high officials of then Montenegro government were involved). As a supprot to this statement there is this certainly mild and utterly disinterested reaction of both political parties and the entire 'democratic' public in Montenegro, as if all of that had been forgotten or a blind eye turned. Add to that a pretty poor media coverage of the act of pressing charges and also the process itself, a conclusion can clearly be made that there is still no fundamental and decisive aproach to the processes of facing the past on the state level to speak of.

Along with that, it is worth to note that signing agreement between governments of Croatia and Montenegro about indemnification with regard to the livestock farm near Dubrovnik, when thousands of animals were transferred to Montenegro during warfare actions, thereby inflicting significant material damage. This act has been presented as a gesture of good will of the president of Montenegro, mr. Filip Vujanovic, one intended to strengthen the good relations with Croatia. This subject was part of the agenda of the Republic Parliament session, fiercely attacked by the opposition seeing this act as non-constitutional, because the signatory - president of the Republic - signed an inter-state agreement with no constitutional authorisation, because only the government is entitled to do so. However, what could have been heard during the discussion itself largely represents the mood and feelings that were prevalent in Montenegro with regard to this event, which is, to put it mildly, a strong opposition and reluctance towards this act that was, primarily by the opposition, interpreted as paying indemnity to Croatia, thereby recognising Montenegro as an agressor, which can under no circumstances be the case.

Montenegro representative's leaving the state unity board for cooperation with the Hague Tribunal is impossible not to be interpreted as yet another in the series of attempts to skillfully avoid responsibility for past events and, of course, presenting Serbia-Belgrade-Milosevic as the sole culprit for all the events of the war, even the ones in which Montenegro directly participated.

The most current relation on the political scene is the one between the state members of the state unity of Serbia and Montenegro, namely the issue of having or not having the referendum that would once and for all solve the status of Montenegro. Foundation of Belgrade movement for preserving the state union, lead by Matija Beckovic, clearly stands in favor of the claims that the matter of referendum can and will not be solved without a major and ever more dangerous involmnet of Serbia itself. Such a movement exists in Montenegro too, as a counterpart of the movement for independent Montenegro, which is yet another of the series of issues dividing the Montenegro public. However, the thing that scares the most is non-existence of a consensus in Montenegro with regard to the matter of referendum on one hand and an already largely initiated campaign for its being held on the other. Both sides have, following a very well known script, started accusing each other of the fact that insisting on having or not having the referendum will 'tense' the situation in Montenegro. The referendum is already defined as warlike, anti-Serbian etc...

The influence of Serbian Orthodox church remains, unlike in the previous years, more than obvious and shamelessly transparent, which only speaks of the power of this institution and its intentions. The situation with raising a church on the summit of Rumija (a pre-Christian shrine visited yearly by members of all three nations gravitating towards the area) speaks of this. Erecting the orthodox church was felt by the non-orthodox folk to be an attack not only against the freedom of religious expression but also an act of aggression and fortifying positions in an area with the majority of orthodox population. Add to that the request to Serbian Orthodox church to remove the church from the summit of Rumija, due to not having the building licence, or the state authorities in charge will carry that out for them, and, in response to that, supporters' of Serbian orthodox church gathering and marching to Rumija with the goal of preventing deconstruction - it is clear how little it takes for the passions in Montenegro to become stirred. Interference of the army that assisted with transportation to the summit of Rumija has remained unsolved to this very day - a process has been started against persons responsible for issuing licences to use military helicopters, but the impression remains that the real initiators have remained hidden.

The most current affair is the work of the parliament of Montenegro, discussing the new draft of the law on the capital and municipalities, according to which Podgorica, as capital, has several municipalities including Tuzi (predominantly populated by Albanians). This law provoked fierce reactions of Albanian population in Montenegro who insisted on having their own municipality. This act helped the feelings and covert hatred still present among members of Albanian and non-Albanian population in Montenegro to surface.

Along with all this, it should be mentioned that the process of privatisation helped to sell everything of even the slightest value in Montenegro, and all that in a, naturally, completely non-transparent way and often with no public debate, non-legally. There is an increasing number of companies with dubious capital and an increasing number of suspicious contracts between the Government of Republic of Montenegro and the companies in question - the latest example probably being the cancellation of a contract signed on the occasion of selling the iron plant in Niksic, because the foreign investor had decided to retreat from Montenegro.

Naturally, organised crime doesn't cease to exist, the murders, among which that of Dusko Jovanovic, editor in chief of Dan daily, and the more recent murder of Slavoljub Scekic, a high official of Ministry of Interior, remain unsolved but unambiguously point towards the existence of larger and better organized crime and criminal groups in Montenegro than it is continually being presented to the public.

## **Serbia**

*by Milan Colić Humljan*

While we talk about Serbia in the year 2005, it is difficult to claim that the social context is better or improved in comparison to the one we had last year. Those who often reflect on the situation in the society, bare the overall, if not predominant, feelings of bitterness and declining optimism. Multitude of problems that are surfacing the deck of the boat that faces day-to-day difficulties sailing through the mire, impede search for a crucial encumbrance of improvement, if we can identify it as one big and recognisable problem. It is getting ever so obvious that it's a matter of complexity of badly shaped value and organizational systems that originate from many compromises, ignorance and inadequacy for the political circumstances of this moment and the state of global and local political relations.

Three years after the assassination of its Prime Minister, Serbia is floating through the mythical waves of "glorious past" of its, way too precocious and righteous people, divided between government that seems to be united and stable despite numerous scandals and strikes, while on the other side there is apathetic and blundering constituency, showing less and less interest in political turmoil, coming to a conclusion that all the politicians and political parties are simply the same. However, they are being misled into such principally wrong conclusion by a ruling coalition, which would be unable to coexist only a few years earlier. The far right-wing Democratic Party of Serbia is heading the government with the support of only formally left-wing Socialistic Party of Serbia who's chief was once Slobodan Milošević. In the government is also the Serbian Renewal Movement of Vuk Drašković, the man who escaped several attempts of assassination during the rule of SPS. Such incongruous associations of political players in Serbian political arena additionally convince average voter that those who take part in politics in Serbia do it solely for their own personal interests. That reduces the chances of those who try to establish credibility with their pragmatic attitude towards tomorrow and with the clear and for this moment less attractive goals.

The government of the Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica is divided into separate fields ruled by certain political parties in accordance with the coalition agreement and election results. Each party rules the ministry they are in charge, without anyone's interference, and the role of the Prime Minister as a supervisor and cohesive factor of the entire government is only formal. In reality, Vojislav Koštunica appears in public only to presents either his own or his party's, non-explicit standpoints. The president Boris Tadić has a similar role. Part of the public that turned their expectations to the Democratic Party did it in vain. All the men who were prone to former Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić's politics were ousted from the party (or left it on their own). Analysts say that DP will not make any serious attempts to overthrow the government because in that case they might loose power on the local level in Belgrade, where they are in coalition with the Democratic Party of Serbia. DP's liberal fraction has grown into a party of its own and is trying to win over civic-oriented part of the constituency, with its approach of total confrontation with current ruling structure, and to exert stronger political influence by winning some parliamentary seats.

At the same time, and in connection with all this, there's a growing support to the Radical Party.

Although the leading political parties had promised radical turn in privatisation process, relations with The Hague Tribunal and education before the elections, they continued to follow the old course under the Western pressure (and exclusively because of it!), only with much more manipulations, rhetoric and commonplaces when it comes to public insight into their reasons and intentions. Ratko Mladić who was indicted by The Hague Tribunal still hasn't been extradited, just days before the deadline.

Privatization, public funds reform and the legislative reform continue (although very sloppy) under the directions and surveillance of the World Bank and the IMF. From the perspective of ordinary citizens it looks like a relationship between a pupil and an authoritarian teacher who punishes every wrong move by making a pupil repeat the class. By refusing to follow advice on cutting down budget spending, the government risked Serbia's a three-year arrangement with those international institutions.

Economic situation is mostly stagnating, especially if we keep in mind high unemployment rate and low wages. On the other hand, different banks offer accessible loans. Reports show that too much money was given for credits which caused high inflation rate that does not coincide with the changes of the course of the national currency (dinar). The trend of "launching scandals" (primarily financial ones) still hasn't stopped this year. Unfortunately, what remains the same is that no one was sentenced or convicted for the scams that were discovered. We cannot escape but wonder what the

purpose of those events is. It is hard to avoid the impression that they are used only in day-to-day politics and party clashes.

There was a lot of discussion about the reform of the army but not much was really done. So called civil control doesn't stand for much in reality. New laws and regulations are both discriminating and punitive towards persons who opt for civil service. The investigation in the case of soldiers who were killed in an unsolved incident at the military compound was closed with several reports that principally did not match each other. In the cases of several criminal contracts that the Army closed, some unknown officers were accused while the responsibility of their superiors was not determined. State budget funds for the Army were spent inadequately, and the government apartments were given away without fair criteria. Membership in the NATO is being commented solely from the perspective of its benefits without any analysis of good and bad aspects of such strategy. Nobody is contesting this society's need to have a powerful army while the term "demilitarisation" remains unknown to the Serbian citizens.

Corruption in legal system has been disclosed all the way from the Supreme Court to the Special Court's Prosecutor's Office. Prosecutor who was responsible for the indictment in the case of murder of Prime Minister Zoran Đinđić was dismissed without any explanation. One of the district attorney's deputies was arrested while the other resigned. Judging by all this, it seems that the Special Court for Organized Crime is exposed to some strong political pressure.

The Serbian Orthodox Church tries to exert its influence on legislative and executive authorities with its constant public presence. The Patriarch appears as a guest at the Congress of the Radical Party while some high church officials praise those indicted by The Hague Tribunal and offer encouragement while seeing off those who turn themselves in...

The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro is in constant crisis. The survival is ensured with blackmail, behind the scenes negotiations, re-distribution of power. Representatives of Montenegro talk about the referendum over and again, while everyday life of Montenegro is being shaken by politically inspired assassinations. Serbia and Montenegro function as two absolutely separate states at this moment.

In the last several months Kosovo, which is the most painful point of current politics in Serbia, has been in the focus of the political debate. One may hear wide range of different opinions. There's much more talks about "right to Kosovo", about the Sacred Serbian land, guarantees according to the Resolution 1244 of the United Nations, then the discussions about needs of the people who live in Kosovo. That is certainly influenced by an uncompromising standpoint of the government of Kosovo expressed in a slogan "independence for Kosovo at all price". Rather often one may hear threats that any other solution would endanger lives of the Serbs who live there. Many speak of "outplaying", "negotiations", "better positions" ... and there's not a word mentioned about talks, agreement, finding a solution.

After a certain improvement, regional relations have deteriorated again. The celebration of the tenth year anniversary of the Operation "Storm" in Croatia and the depiction of that action as "glorious and purely defensive" increased the tensions. At the same time in Serbia, a ceremony was held to mark ten years since the massacre of the Serbs in Croatia. Statement of federal minister of foreign affairs, Vuk Drašković that the independence of Kosovo would take along the independence of the Republic of Srpska was quite a strong blow for the already unstable situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The arrest of the bishop Jovan of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Macedonia, for the reasons that have a completely political background and fit into a recognisable cliché of "defence of the national interests" were quite a hard blow to current relations of Serbia and Macedonia.

In the context of regional relations, one should mention as positive the following events: visit of the Serbian president Boris Tadić to the commemoration of the victims of the massacre in Srebrenica, sentences for the crimes committed in Vukovar and Štrpce, the beginning of a new trial for the crimes in Lora prison in Split... Heartbreaking tape of the execution of the Muslims from Srebrenica which was broadcast in Serbia left a strong and an important impact on the Serbian public concerning the attitude towards crimes committed in their name. However, it is sad that only such an obvious proof is accepted and incite condemnation of the crime(s) that was (were) committed.

There's a lot to be done at this moment and a very few people who are doing it dutifully and honestly. Many people believe that it is in European Union's best interest that things get better in Serbia and there are many expectations based on it. It is hard to figure out if it is better to "sink" and try again from scratch or continue to move slowly while making "one step ahead, and two steps backwards". And it is even harder to figure out who is supposed to make a fresh start or gallop ahead.

### ***Visit to Kosovo and the town of Presevo in the South of Serbia***

*by Nenad Vukosavljević*

At the beginning of June, a group of 6 peace activists from Serbia and Macedonia, including a two member team from TVK9, a regional TV from Kragujevac, visited Kosovo and Presevo. Our visit was organised by friends and collaborators from Gnjilane, and the idea has emerged during the networking meeting of peace activists from Serbia, Macedonia and Kosovo taking place in Kocani, Macedonia, in March this year. The need for this type of visit stems from the wish to experience the situation in Kosovo first hand and to, through conversations with people, examine the possibilities and potentials for work on peacebuilding and over-the-border connections. Unfortunately, the conditions for safe independent mobility of people from Serbia and Macedonia (in case they're not Albanian) do not exist, but we have felt very safe in the company of our Albanian friends. Thanks to kindness of the regional OSCE office from Gnjilane, we had their van at our disposal during the four days of the trip.

During the four very intense days, we have had the opportunity of visiting Presevo, several villages around Gnjilane, the very city of Gnjilane, Vitina, Pristina and Štrpce. We have talked to many people, some of them very high officials of Kosovo government: minister for decentralisation and local government, Lufti Haziri, deputy prime minister of Kosovo, Mr. Saliu, counselors of minister for return and inter-ethnic relations and the mayor of the town of Vitina.

We have also met the editors of TV Kosovo – a public TV service, TV21 – the biggest private TV company in Kosovo, two smaller TV stations (one Serbian, the other Albanian) from Kosovo Podrinje, representative of Štrpce municipality, representatives of OSCR and UNMIK from Gnjilane, dislocated persons – Serbs from the village of Zegra, Albin Kurti, the leader of 'Self-determination' movement and Adem Demaqi, president of Kosovo Association of writers. One of the most impressive experiences is related to the visit to a poor Albanian village, where our host, a friend of our organisers', invited us to lunch prepared in our honor and received us in a way that the signatory of these lines had never experienced before.

In Presevo, we had the opportunity of meeting the president of the assembly of municipality of Kosovo, municipality board members, the Albanians who had previously been members of the armed group UCPBM - Liberation Army for Presevo, Bujanovac and Medvedja, president of Culture center in Presevo, and a representative of (unregistered in Serbia, due to its name) Association of warriors and families of the deceased warriors of UCPBM.

Such a visit couldn't have been realised without the huge engagement undertaken primarily by an activist of the organisation Lansdowne of Gnjilane, Shaban Terziu, and our friends from the organisation Action for Non Violence and Peacebuilding from Gnjilane, Nexhat Ismaili and Gazmend Murseli.

Now, as I'm writing this, almost 4 months after the visit, it is easy to remember details from this trip, the pleasant, stressful, funny and difficult moments. Since a detailed description would surpass the framework of this report, I will limit myself to general experiences.

We were received mostly very cordially, almost everywhere we went, even including the restaurants we stopped to eat or have coffee at. Most of the Albanians we talked to spoke Serbian with no holding back, which even surprised us a bit, and we have seen this as their gesture of good will towards strangers visiting them. To the question we have asked all the Albanians in Kosovo, 'Has anyone from Serbia visited you in the past six years, to talk or establish contact', the answer was predominantly the same 'no, no one, you're the first'.

We could divide the stories into the categories of 'What Albanians say' and 'What Serbs say'.

### *The Albanians' View*

The Albanians mostly speak of progress achieved in democratisation of society, meeting standards and the like, and we have experienced the remark of the president of Vitina municipality that 'even if some of Albanian politicians accepted anything less than independence, the people would never settle for it and there would be war again' as almost threatening. To a direct question, everyone will say that Serbs and other minorities must have all rights, must be included in Kosovo institutions and stop being 'hostages of Belgrade', and that 'the violence of March 17 2003 could never be repeated if UNMIK transferred all its authority to the government of Kosovo'.

Among the nice thoughts of A. Demaqi, such as 'We love our people, but not to other peoples' detriment. Our freedom is a condition for your freedom', and 'If I come up with a solution that will keep us enemies, that's no way to lead my people', we have also heard 'If Serbs in Kosovo don't like living here in an independent Kosovo, let them go back to Serbia, Serbia is big, there is room for them over there'. Political opinion we heard from Albin Kurti and Adem Demaqi can be reduced to the demand of 'Unconditional independence of Kosovo now', refusing negotiations and failing to perceive the need for dialogue with Serbs from both Kosovo and Serbia. It would be fair to mention that they also received us very nicely and stayed talking for two hours.

We encountered the most sincere wish for dialogue and attempts to create confidence in order for the refugee Serbs to return in our talk with the minister for decentralisation, Lufti Haziri. Among other things, he told us about how, some time ago, when he was still the mayor of Gnjilane, he wished to visit Serbs, refugees from Gnjilane, the majority of whom are now located in Nis. His visit has not been realised because he hasn't received permission from Serbian authorities in charge. In turn, he has visited Serbian refugees from Kosovo in Montenegro, and Roma refugees in Macedonia, in his attempt to let them know they can and should return home.

There are several hundred photographs of missing Albanians on the building of the government of Kosovo in Pristina, whereas there are no photographs of missing people of other nationalities.

Deputy prime minister of Kosovo, Mr. Saliu, who had spent 12 years in prison during the time of Yugoslavia, switched to Serbian after twenty minutes of talking with translation, and among other things told us that due to the interests of joining Europe, it is significant for Kosovo to build as good as possible relations with Serbia, even though it is hard to imagine them being friendly, bearing in mind the past war.

During the conversation with counselors of minister for return, K. Kundalic, D. Kukurekovic and R. Redzepagic, we have heard that there has been no registered return of Bosniak refugees, and that a third of the one time number of 38000 of them remained, whereas today the majority of young people are educated at faculties in Novi Sad, Belgrade, Sarajevo. They stated that the situation in Pristina was better, because they can move about freely and use their mother tongue, with the additional remark that 'there are no guarantees they won't be shot in the street'.

Sulejman Shaqiri, editor in chief of the News at RTKosovo, said that minorities take offense at only the issue of Serbs being treated, that there are people in Kosovo who haven't seen a single Serb from the war onwards, and that he's sorry that 'none of my Serb friends ever came to ask if I needed anything during the war. And I was in an apartment with my sick mother and small children'. About programmes dealing with the violent past (and present), he said that the programme 'Colour of Life', in which victims of violence during the war state their testimonies, had good viewers' rating. Only Albanian victims have been portrayed in the programme so far. He told us that Albanians in Kosovo 'don't believe the talks about missing Serbs, just as in Serbia they don't know about the killing of Albanians. People don't accept having criminals and murderers among them'.

### *The Serbs' View*

Unlike Albanians who live in 'The State of Kosovo', a great majority of Serbs live in the 'state of Serbia'. In the presence of Albanians they say they receive some small help from Serbia, and without Albanians present they say they could not live without the help from Serbia.

'If Kosovo becomes independent, there will be no survival for the Serbs. Serbs' human rights are violated, from freedom to move onwards', we were told in the municipality of Strpce. We have heard criticism about the ministry for return, the head of which is Mr. Petkovic, that opened an office for return in Strpce in which the return had been completed, and there are no such offices in, say, Pec. They complain of having to translate into Albanian all correspondence with Kosovo administration, whilst only receiving documents in Albanian, even though official languages are, apart from Albanian, Serbian and English.

Representative of Serbs dislocated from the village of Zegra after the war, who live in the neighbouring village of Pasjane and can see the outskirts of their village on the foots of a nearby hill, but cannot return there, says he doesn't know who is responsible for crimes against Albanians in Zegra, and that the responsible should be brought to justice. As far as the Serbian side is concerned, the 'problems' begin with the armed conflict, and when it comes to the conditions before the war and violating the rights of Albanians in the previous period, they are either reluctant to talk about it



or don't seem to have any awareness of it whatsoever. Along the violence of March 17 2004, in which hundreds of churches were burned down, thousands of people were exiled and dozens of people killed, the sporadic, but persistent armed assaults against Serbs maintain a climate of fear, lack of confidence and hatred. On the other hand, boycott of Kosovo institutions in fact encourages a shared perception of opposing communities, in which the very existence of the others represents a hindrance to realising one's own freedom and progress.

### *Overall impression*

Hatred and distrust are huge, contacts between people from different communities minimal. Without the status being resolved it is hard to imagine the improvement of the quality of life, because the absence of status prevents the possibility of developing a long term economic perspective. On the other hand, it is clear that the standards superordinated to the status have not nearly been met, and it is hard to imagine that the main problems, those being hatred and lack of communication, could be improved with mere solution of the status. As far as the potential for work on peacebuilding is concerned, it could be said it is completely invisible at the moment, because the pressure within the communities to keep homogenous is enormous. Every step away from it (such as, say, cooperation with others) can be interpreted as 'treason' by the extremists, which would jeopardise not only credibility of anyone initiating such a thing, but could possibly lead to being condemned by one's own community and eventually even physical danger.

Albanian community seems to be completely submerged in their role of the victim of aggression of Milosevic regime, demanding compensation through independence, and current violence against Serbs is largely perceived as justified or is at least not talked about. At the same time, the Serbian community is also profoundly in their role of a victim, due to harassment going on since 2001. Violence of one's own side against the other community is reluctantly mentioned by either side, or they tend to minimise it, which enflames the passions of the ones on the other side.

Our stay in Kosovo has, even with the experience we have with working and moving through various areas of former SFRY in which visitors from the other side are not welcome, was like a stay on a planet with different rules altogether. If the moment of meeting Serbian police after leaving Kosovo felt like a relief, it is a sure sign that we had spent time in a completely deranged system of values. At the same time, we wouldn't be surprised if meeting Kosovo police would provide a similar sense of relief to an Albanian.

In accordance with this, the feeling remains that it will be extremely difficult to work on peacebuilding in Kosovo, because the points on which we could rely are missing, except for a few friends we have made working on peace education. This very thing indicates that road towards building capacities and realizing contacts is one of creating prerequisites for the work on essentially debatable matters around Kosovo, which lies before us in the future.

The greatest potential and greatest responsibility for this process of peacebuilding are in the hands of the very population of Kosovo, the only ones who can create prerequisites for dialogue and understanding, and it seems to us that the most important thing of all would be to recognise and condemn violence against the other community perpetrated on both of the sides' behalf.

Apart from the achieved contacts and insight into the situation, the only concrete result of the visit is a programme of Katarina Milicevic of Kragujevac TV station K9 about the visit itself, that has been shown and had many reruns on viewers' request.

### Shamelessness of denial

*by Nenad Vukosavljević*

We would be deprived if the goal of for war crime trials were merely to carry out punishment for perpetrators and orderers, without our reaching the realisation about co-responsibility we all have to a greater or smaller extent.

Even though humanitarian law defines what a crime is in a war, it fails to recognise war itself as a crime. Still, all around us, even ten years later, there are many traces of the war, starting with hatred, to the exiled, families of missing persons, destroyed lives of people deprived of their rights, having suffered injustice that no court could set straight. War is a crime in itself, even when it is 'only' soldiers killing each other. In spite of that, or for that very reason, all of us, even those who have come out of the war fairly unharmed, have a duty of recognising our own responsibility, both for what we have done and supported and for what we haven't done and could have.

Even today, it is with incredible energy and hatred that many publicly storm at citizens' associations that struggle for human rights or contribute to shedding light on crimes, and many ordinary people view them as traitors. They are being accused of being mercenary or profiteer. And in turn, these same people recognise the ones who, during the bombing of Serbia, got apartments as a reward for their political merits as protectors, their hopes for the future are inspired by the ones who shamelessly enriched themselves during the greatest poverty and robbery organised and sponsored by the state. There is no hatred against such, and in fact there shouldn't be any, for hatred is an illness a person carries, genuine contempt for such individuals would be much more appropriate.

An average person living in Serbia today, in the year 2005, on the tenth anniversary of cessation of military actions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, will tell you they condemn all crimes and that the ones responsible should be punished, at the same time opposing extradition of 'our guys' to some foreign court, and that the traitors are the ones from our side who expose evidence of crimes committed on their behalf. The crime on our behalf is confessed and condemned with abhorrence providing there is footage of the killing, and the fact that, say, the remains of hundreds and thousands of executed civilians lie in a warehouse near Tuzla hasn't been enough for the realisation of the committed crime to be accepted. It is no better in the case of our neighbours we have lead the war against, but this average citizen is prepared to compete in shamelessness of denying with the neighbours instead of taking a painful step of facing and confessing, a step that is painful because it entails starting from one's own self. Where have I been, what have I been doing, whom was I supporting, whom was I admiring, trusting, cheering to? The whole life bursting like a soap bubble. And then, what follows is a tainted myth of innocence and righteousness of one's own people, the myth that should be got rid of and the fact accepted that people cannot be viewed in terms of honest-dishonest, good-bad. Not much remains for this average person to hold on to, and that's why it is hard, because, on the bases of black and white categories, they cannot place themselves where they would like to. And it is not that hard, because a person is what a person does, and their actions can be altered in accordance with their sense and sense of justice.

### *Condemnation and sentence*

The realisation that not all are the same seems like a good start. There are many Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, Albanians who don't identify themselves with crimes committed on behalf of their people, but instead condemn these publicly, and, let's call things their proper names, they are not traitors, but conscience of their own people.

The first prerequisite for reconciliation and building mutual trust between people who were on opposing sides during the war is not to sanction war crimes, but for them to be condemned by the ones on behalf of whom they had been committed. Sanctioning is a logical step that follows, not for the sake of revenge or setting straight the injustice that cannot be set straight, but as an act of a responsible society that removes the blur of collective guilt and reduces it to what it is, individual guilt. The punishment for a crime is not satisfaction to the families of the victims, but an acknowledgement of their suffering, injustice done to them, establishing the truth about the fate of the victims is what brings certainty and ends a longtime process of struggle for truth and justice. This act merely opens the possibility of the wounds people carry for years healing.

Things would be easier and more simple if the same criteria would be applied to 'ours' and 'others', then we would only measure with our own sense of justice and basic humanity, with no interference of the national as an element influencing the value system, transforming the suffering of our compatriots into something larger and more important than that of the other side.

Responsibility is linked with the power we have to influence things, us, citizens of Serbia, carry this responsibility in this country of ours first of all, that's where we can influence and contribute to building a more just and more humane society, in favor of the huge majority, including these maddened, confused and scared ordinary citizens of ours. We also carry the responsibility for allowing the opportunity to change, to not label people and allow them to abandon the bonds of stances they had been slaves to ten years ago. If we succumb to the attraction of superior entrenchment and moralising, from the position of those whose 'hands are clean', as opposed to people with 'dirty hands', we will do injustice to the tricked ones, the ones who haven't known, haven't been able to, have been afraid, have lied to themselves, and even to the ones who have repented. The road of reconciliation also starts with ourselves, in relation to and against society that supports change instead of cementing the current condition and expanding the trenches between 'us, the good' and 'them, the evil'.

### *Former warriors for peace*

The one time warriors and peace activists are two seemingly irreconcilable categories of people. Some would call them patriots and traitors respectively. It has been four years now since former warriors from Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina have worked together at what they have recognised as a shared value, peacebuilding in the region. It had been hard to initiate such a thing, but much easier than would have been expected. Contrary to the prevailing opinion about irreconcilable opposition, a great number of people from all the one time warring sides, perceive the senselessness of violence they have taken part in and feel the need and responsibility to, learning from their gruesome experience, become engaged in building peace and cooperation between people, to advocate the rights of all, and particularly the ones they used to experience as enemies.

It is not just the superficial and fake story of 'whoever lead us to fight each other', it is not even the one of 'the politicians are to blame, if it had been up to people the war would never have taken place'. Things are more profound than that. The people had indeed been asked, and when they had been asked, believing they'd win, the majority had been in favor of the war, which should also be faced. Expectations had not been met, and their hearts filled with sorrow, rage, hatred and fear.

One should oppose 'one's own', the ones in their own environments who keep spreading hatred, who keep the hopes of revenge warm, who allow themselves to speak on our behalf, who flaunt the numbers of the masses behind them as they speak and deny the ones who think differently the right to say or do anything. The choice is before the people yet again, the choice between fake security of misconception trying to justify injustice done to others, and honesty in relation to 'their own' and 'others'. I know dozens of warriors from all three one time warring sides who now have the courage to fight for peace and justice, for a fair society they live in, and many of them say it was easier to carry a gun than fight myths of immaculacy of their own people. I have also seen thousands of people who have visited panel discussions where the former warriors from all three sides spoke and who generally saluted these brave people. And the greatest number of visitors were former warriors and refugees, the ones that were severely affected by the war. Such voices are not rare, but are rarely heard from all the noise makers and bullies from all three sides, that's why it is important to react, that's why it is important to voice it, to make it clear that it is not on our behalf. If we lived in a country in which all structures of state and society had a consensus about this honest attitude, that every person must have their own right, regardless of their name, there would be less need for citizens to come together to protect themselves or to express their solidarity in protecting others. Unfortunately, more often than not people realize this only when they feel injustice on their own skin and see that the others don't care because they fear for themselves, and in fact merely hope they are not the next in line.

## Ten years later...

*by Sanja Vujasinović*

The surviving and the exiled still mourn for their killed and missing loved ones. Not a day goes by without them thinking of them. Some have buried their dead loved ones, some don't even know where their remains are. Not a day goes by without them remembering their houses, their hearths, a cow, flowers. Some have returned to their houses that are half or entirely burned down, looted, bared. Some live in shelters to this very day and are wanted by no one. Neither the ones here nor the ones there.

Ones bow, the others light candles. Ones go to mosques, others go to churches. Ones cross themselves with three fingers, the others with four... And the tears are of the same shape and color. And the sorrow is equally deep and devastating. The pain equally immeasurable. Mother, child, father, brother, hearths burned to the ground... they have equal significance everywhere and cause equal emotions.

At the same time, some are 'celebrating' liberation of Srebrenica and Knin. They glorify their wartime 'heroes', sheltering them somewhere in their woods, wear t-shirts with their pictures. Some state officials apologise publicly, the others don't. One of them goes to memorial services to a part of the victims, and not the other part. The other doesn't even speak their mind about that in public. The third talks about creating conditions for refugees returning, but works little on it. Some don't give 'their' refugees the right to become citizens of their country. They don't even think about 'someone else's' refugees and their returning to their homes. According to ones, it was genocide, according to others it was a defense war.

All sorts of writings in the newspapers. Eight thousand victims in one, 2000 in another. In one of them: 'the ones from the outside are to blame for all', other blame Tudjman, Milosevic, Izetbegovic. They justify and support the politics of their favorite politicians. 'Victors write history' - it is said.

However, the question is: 'Who is the victor and who the defeated?' 'Who defended themselves and from who/what, and who attacked and for what/who?' And on whose behalf?

And the people - always the same. They believe what they are served on television or in the papers. The difference is only whether they read Srpski nacional or Danas. Whether they watch national TV, BK or B92. Come to think of it, why would they think at all, when they get everything processed and ready to be used. They need their heads to think of how to make it through this month on the little salary they bring home - if they get it at all. They don't have time to think, or willingness to empathise with someone else's misfortune. They have enough of their own. Too much so.

Few are the ones who can empathise with others, who don't look at how someone crosses themselves or how they pray, who are not interested in ethnicity but consider a victim to be a victim. They feel their pain, sorrow, loss. They fight for elementary rights of those people. And for that reason they are often called 'domestic traitors', 'foreign mercenaries', 'satans in human form'. Some of them are brutally attacked, beaten, interrogated. Their families are exposed to psychological terror. At the same time, the real terrorists and criminals walk the streets, have the benefits the state can provide for them, and the most 'patriotic' ones are hidden from the 'unjust' Hague with great care.

This is the present time, 10 years after Srebrenica, Bratunac, Knin, Glina... The question springs to mind of where I have been ten years ago, what I was feeling and thinking back then? And at the very moment I ask myself that question, I feel waves of shame and embarrassment. I remember that I had no job in 1995, that I was looking for work, I often met working women who told me, in ijekavica, that the position had been taken. I have seen luxurious cars with Bosnian plates cruising through Novi Sad. I met many boutique and café owners who have refuted from Croatia and Bosnia and opened their businesses around here. And that's when I wondered 'Is there any work at all for me in my hometown, when all the vacancies were filled by refugees?' I was desperate. One time I even said to an acquaintance, a refugee from Krajina: 'We were doing fine before you people came along. And at the same time, I haven't seen a single refugee camp, I haven't met the ones who came on tractors carrying nothing but a bundle of food and clothing. I haven't talked to anyone who lost their loved ones in this senseless war. I have only seen my own discontent and only sympathised with my own grief.

And now, ten years later...

I feel and think differently now. In the meantime I've grown and become aware of my responsibility both now and then. And my failure to react back then, but also my resolution to change that. I am now able to sympathise with the victims of the war even though I live at my home, I am a citizen of my country, no one in my family has been hurt, or missing. From my own perception, I try to understand the ones who don't have this sense of peace I have. And I struggle for them to find it one day, to live without hatred towards my people and to nurture values of peace in their children, values of respecting the differences, non violence. I have also met those who have voluntarily or by force been participants in the war and who are aware of their own responsibility. Now these people are great and brave fighters for lasting peace. I have also met the ones who had left the country not wanting to be a part of this madness. At that time they were cowards and traitors of their own people (still are, for some). These people speak through their own example of how one doesn't have to accept a gun, no matter how others try to impose it on them. It is a matter of resolution and faith in non violence. I have met many individuals who, like myself, advocate the values of lasting peace. All of them together, including my family, give me the strength and motivation for work.

I have chosen to love instead of to hate. I have chosen to understand, not to be self centered. I have chosen to fight for my rights and the rights of others, instead of just lazily dragging myself through life. And I am happy for it, because this choice is where my peace lies.

## Ten years later – Hatred Pact Stability

*by Adnan Hasanbegović*

It's been 10 years since the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the fall of 1995 the war operations ended and three belligerent sides signed the Dayton Peace Agreement, under great pressure of the international community. With the arrival of numerous international military troops (called SFOR, at the time), the political and military balance was established in the field, and the state union of Bosnia and Herzegovina was formed with the Constitution that predominantly relied on the ratified peace treaty. That is an important fact simply because the Agreement was signed by the belligerent parties which had been until that very moment in a relationship marked with blood and violence. Killing, slaughter, exile, rape, concentration camps, shelling, injuries ... stopped with an official hand shake and signatures on the treaty by three «fathers» of the nations or three formal presidents of states, under whose heads were presidents of even more powerful states, which was a scene that symbolically reflected the pyramidal structure of global (dis)order.

Inertness of war events, which was strongly suppressed by the force and morbidity of those events, continues to transfer itself intensively to all the aspects of people's lives in this region. The Dayton political frame and the actual agreement ended the war but did not bring peace, quite the contrary: some would say that they enabled the "war" to be continued by other means, to a great extent. Political clashes, lobbying and passing laws all come down to preserving power positions of nationalistic centres that really uphold the legacy of those sides that were in the war against each other. The situation changes very slowly and the post-war atmosphere determines the social dynamics quite strongly. Various forms of discrimination against minorities are still very much present, as well as premeditated obstruction of return of the displaced persons, expressions of solidarity with war criminals and national segregation on every level... There's neither a clear vision of the future that is wanted nor the frames of the society in which we want to live, with the exception of political phrases imposed by the pressure of international community and principle path towards European integrations. Poverty of the wider population and accumulation of wealth of the elite through dubious privatisation, besides everything else, additionally frustrate the individual and the community and carry a great potential for social disaster.

It is indicative that Paddy Ashdown recently stated he didn't agree with some of his colleagues that the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was similar to the one in '92. His opinion was that we were in the same situation as we had been in '95. He didn't, however look back to his own huge responsibility (and the responsibility of the international community, in general) for the process of going back to '95, ten years later.

In discord with that statement, one might say that there are many reasons to feel pessimistic, in the context of building of sustainable peace in this region. Unlike Serbia and Montenegro and Croatia, where political radicalism and nationalism are more obvious, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, one might say that it has inefficiently disguised itself into various symbolic phenomena. There's not that much open hate speech in public (the exceptions are, so called, high risk sport events, with their loud eruption of fascists' pamphlets). Still, every once in a while, they appear in various forms, such are sermons of some religious representatives, media coverage of war events accompanied by the rhetoric of the victims solely on "our" side, presentation of superficial political requests as national interests of crucial importance, etc. On an individual level, through informal discussions with people, one might hear much more open hate speech, prejudices, mistrust, as well as some kind of tiredness with the themes that treat war and politics. There's a tendency to shake off the burden of war past with some cultural and other events, which would be a good thing if that was in balance with

processes that lead to more honest and noble dealing with the past wars and more active involvement in peace building.

It seems that we have been living a “10 year process”, although the question remains if the processes of transition on one hand and peace building on the other, had or have at least similar aspirations, or we want to live like in Luxembourg but at the same time to continue hating each other (or at least reduce it to the reasonable level). There are, of course, some positive examples, but in order to see them, we must look hard through the veil of our own motives, traumas and fears for our future. Because, it seems that we're waiting for the process to move towards making people's lives more easy, instead of bringing us back to the beginning, like in works of the director David Lynch (lynching people). And, if the British diplomat was right, we're lucky to be back in '95 instead of in '92.

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