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# IX 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,

It's been nine years since the Centre for Nonviolent Action was founded and started to work. We can say without any reserve that we have never had more questions and dilemmas regarding different levels of our work.

The ninth year of our work was marked with our intensive engagement in different areas - peace education and dealing with the past, production of documentaries and our unpretentious but still industrious publishing production.

Only a year ago when we started to work in media that was new to us and to walk down some new paths (documentaries, publications), it seemed like we were entering into something new and carefully researching our own abilities and capacities. From today's point of view it looks like a road already well paved, which does not lack neither challenges nor surprises (both pleasant and unpleasant), on which we do know how to steer our course. Films that we produced are being shown on TV stations with both local and state coverage and are used as a part of the peace education curriculum, not just in the region of the former Yugoslavia but in the wider region, too.

The results of our work are the following: two completed documentaries and the third one, which is being edited; there's one publication that we published and the other one is under way, and we hope it will be worth every effort we have invested in it.

Additionally, there are also training events which makes the entire picture more colourful. They remain to be our main activity (this statement is based on both the analysis of our work plans and the position that various types of training events have in them, and on the feeling that doesn't seem to be confirmed by anything else that is more concrete: as an organization, we are still recognized as «those who do good trainings». Another thing that adds up to this colourfulness is the transformation of our «training events in nonviolent conflict transformation» into the «training events in peace building». The change has occurred due to our need to make programmes of peace education that will meet the needs and priorities of our societies, ourselves and those who are part of the society, as we recognize them. Since we consider peace building (with all its accompanying processes, dealing with the past certainly being the most important of them all) as the priority above anything else, we wanted to give this priority as big an importance as possible even on the level of *naming* what we do.

Having in mind the number and the nature of all the various activities that we conduct, their intensity which requires extremely high levels of energy, time and dedication, it is not surprising that we have been overflooded with questions and dilemmas regarding: ourselves, CNA as an organization and a real desire and satisfaction that we receive through our work. Since we are not keen on painting the reality in which we live in some false colours, we neither want to paint our place/role in this reality.

The fact that we are facing some big challenges that the uncertain future and undefined social reward we receive for our work, makes us rather frustrated. On the other hand, the feeling helps us acquire a sharp picture of the (civil) society in which we live and work, which is weak, divided, dependant on the donor's dictation, who again are dependant on the dictation of the biggest and the most powerful (states, politicians, ..., you name it); which is made of organizations that multiply instead of criticize disputable and discriminatory relations and systems of power and who perceive each other primarily as a competition rather than anything else. And, for the sake of better understanding: we do have *our place* and *our responsibility* in the entire system and one of the manifestations of our responsibility is our intention to open up and contribute to these problematic settings (in CNA, and elsewhere), because we find that by influencing the change of the paradigm according to which people here work can only be useful and can increase the level of enthusiasm and motivation (both ours as well as of the society). And without that, it is clear that the social change that is being *advertised* so widely will not happen. Nor would it have a more noticeable impact on the society.

# CNA TRAINING PROGRAMMES

## The Basic Trainings Events 2005-2006

During the past year, starting with September 2005, until August 2006, we held three basic training events in nonviolent conflict transformation, i.e. peace building: two of them took place in Tivat, Montenegro (October 2005 and April 2006) and one was held in Travnik (Bosnia and Herzegovina) in June 2006.

This year the training was given a new name: The Training in Peace Building, which was really the result of changes of the programme's concept and shift of the focus of work from conflict transformation to peace building and social processes that accompany it. Most of these processes/problems had been dealt with at our previous training events, too (like understanding the sources of violence and discrimination in society, recognizing and reduction of prejudices, dealing with the past, trust building, promotion of nonviolent ways to deal with these phenomena), but with our new concept we established a more distinctive framework within which we can work on these themes, and we set up a more prominent connection with current social situation in which these problems grew ever more pressing (that is especially the case with the process of dealing with the past). At this moment when crimes committed during the 90-ties wars, mass graves and (lack of) arrests of those most responsible for all the brutalities and crimes make main headlines on almost daily basis and people start to feel firsthand consequences of neglecting these problems, the concept of our training is moving towards even stronger incentive to work on dealing with the past.



Surely, to talk about these things in the first place and open space for these areas, we needed to cover the «standard» themes like: communication, teamwork, decision making, understand conflict, violence, identity, ethnic identity, prejudices (especially «ethnic» prejudices), discrimination.

This concept is put together to the detriment of a more comprehensive adoption of skills that the training has offered so far, but on the other hand, it offers participants much more material for re-examination

and taking over responsibility for the society we all live in. That is, by separating the theme of dealing with the past and combining it with peace building, as a whole, we opened up some space for more direct discussions, thus opening some crucial questions without a chance to escape the subject, which we would encounter rather often at some previous training events.

There was one thing that all three training events had in common: screening of documentaries with the theme of dealing with the past, either during formal or informal time (during workshops or on the breaks). People shared their impressions about these films which they found both emotionally hard and important as well, and it seemed to us that they additionally helped them understand how important and complex were regional work, process of dealing with the past and overcoming the mounted difficulties in our societies. Apart from that, film screening brought some refreshment to our methodological approach.

With this new, modified concept we were in a dilemma due to the feeling of heaviness that was present throughout the entire training, starting from the day one and almost all the way until the end. In other words, trainees may find it very hard to face very difficult and painful themes day after day (like for example the roles of the victim and the bully, guilt and responsibility, etc.). However, we were under the impression that the growing heaviness at the training was followed by the increased motivation and empowerment for peace work. The empowerment for peace work was mostly expressed at later stages of the training, especially after encountering difficulties in confronting problems related to

dealing with the past and peace building (the process mostly unfolded from resignation or even feeling of helplessness at some moments, to motivation and desire to work in this field). We find it especially important to see participants' awareness that peace building starts from oneself and some small steps, instead of projects, as one can often hear...

Participants at these training events were, among others, people who had been directly involved in the war and carried some hard experiences, and were willing to share these experiences with others, like for example women from the Association of Families of Missing Persons in the 1991-99 Wars, disabled veteran as well as others who were both able and had a need to share their painful and moving war experiences (like thirty year old man, living in Bratunac and a woman who lives in Konjic, etc.). Anyway, at some training events we happen to encounter an understandable resistance and fear of talking about different perceptions and attitudes towards conflicts and war related violence, so these themes need to be covered gradually and in some smaller steps, which was not the case this time. It is important to underline that sharing the experiences within the group, however difficult, somehow brings people together and moves them.



The increased readiness to discuss the past was probably, among other things, due to the letter of invitation trainees had received where the theme of dealing with the past was explicitly mentioned.

All three groups of participants were mostly regionally and ethnically balanced with an important participation of members of ethnic minorities, whose presence and experiences contribute to an imminent awareness of the existing discriminations and ethnically-inspired violence committed in the 90-ies. Unfortunately, we keep receiving an insufficient number of applications from Albanians living in Macedonia, Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbs in Croatia, etc.

Another additional difficulty related to the training events was impediment to provide funding. We are under the impression that the training events aren't so interesting for donors, therefore this year again we were supported only by Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs and German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) - which give us the biggest support for basic training events.

However, we were planning to have one more training, but due to the bad response from applicants (especially from certain regions), we decided to cancel it. We suppose that the reason this happened was a short break between the two training events, so it is important to have this in mind for the future.

However, even though only three training events were held, there was enough potential for the Advanced Training which is going to be held in August and October 2006.



# DEALING WITH THE PAST

## Training for Veterans

Bjelašnica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, May 26 - 31, 2006

Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, July 14 - 17, 2006

The fourth training that CNA organized for combatants of 1991-1999 was consisted of two phases, which were held in June and July this year.

Ten veterans took part in the first phase and twelve in the second phase of the training.

The implementation of the training was preceded by the period of reflection and selection of the most adequate approach to work with this group of participants and that took quite a long time. The experiences we had gathered over the years in our work with the veterans were very helpful and so were various experiences of a few veterans' associations that started working independently in the field of peace building. Aiming to make as successful approach to the war veteran's associations as possible, and to meet real (and not just desired, or even supposed) needs of this segment of the population, the decision was made to offer partnership in organizing the training events to two veteran's associations based in Vlasotince/Vranje (Serbia) and Šibenik (Croatia). That intention was accomplished only partially, mostly in the second phase of the training.

This time again we could not escape having to make endless phone calls, or should we better say pestering numerous veteran associations that work in the triangle of Serbia - Croatia - Bosnia and Herzegovina. Many times we were promised that people would come to a meeting (later on, quite miraculously, nothing happened) and even more often we encountered cancellations for various reasons, some acceptable and some extremely fictitious. All of that would not deserve to be mentioned if it didn't point out to a very serious symptom that characterized the relations between veterans and peace activists. That relation is marked with an extreme mistrust, even fear of «highly suspicious manipulations of nongovernmental organizations and foreign powers» which is a wide spread perception amongst big part of the population of our peoples. The kind of peace work that CNA has been practising for years already, also fits into this perception. In this situation, the easiest thing to do is to accuse veterans to be ignorant, obstinate, etc., but the problem is far more complex and touches the matters like guilt, responsibility, trauma, social (in) justice, marginalization, manipulation, personal and collective fears and who knows what else. However, somewhere in the mishmash of different kinds of violence and injustice, more or less tangible reasons for the existence of the gap above mentioned, we found the motivation to continue with our work with combatants and try to make the gap at least a little more transparent (thus making it, even for a moment senseless) if not reduce it.

It may look odd that after five years of work with this group, same goals remained to be priority, but we need to emphasize the importance of realistic and attainable goals and establishment of priorities in those things we would like to achieve. So, if this year again situation requires that before we get into peace building with this segment of population, we need to stop *deconstruction* of peace that comes from groups like these, so will deal with it, for start. If the gap that exists between us is based on pictures



and images that were created without any connection with our true desires and intentions

whatsoever - we shall first deconstruct those pictures and that gap. And the best way to achieve this is to sit down and talk to each other honestly.

This training achieved it to a great extent, therefore from that point of view, we can say that it was worth it. On the other hand, one challenge brings along at least a few new ones, just as it is usually the case. Therefore, we need to figure out where to go with this type of training, and what is it that we can offer to each other with respect to a more intense joining of all in the work on peace building and initiating communication regarding some new and much more complex themes like: what kind of society do we want and what values should it be based upon? The idea of having an open communication on the theme above mentioned where it would be possible to find common ground at this moment remains a great challenge. And what tells us that it's a challenge worth pursuing is the existence of all those people who show us that the monolithic picture of veterans is neither realistic nor ethical, just like the case is with peace activists, for that matter.

The documentation of this programme is still being made and any additional information about the themes, methodology etc. may be obtained at [cna.beograd@nenasilje.org](mailto:cna.beograd@nenasilje.org) or [cna.sarajevo@nenasilje.org](mailto:cna.sarajevo@nenasilje.org).



## **Training Events with Youth on the Theme of «Dealing with the Past»**

*I: Milići, Bosnia and Herzegovina, September 30 - October 3; December 9 - 12, 2005*

*II: Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina, March 17 - 20, 2006, Milići, March 24 - 27, 2006*

At the end of 2005 and in the beginning of 2006, we implemented four small training events on the theme of dealing with the past. The first two events were the result of cooperation and initiative of the »Odisej« - Bratunac based youth organization, while the other two were organized by the Nansen Dialogue Centre's Sarajevo office.

### **I: Training Events in Milići**

The original idea was to bring together youth from two small Bosnian towns of Bratunac and Hadžići, burdened with some "weighty" history and unusual interconnections. That is, during the war, Hadžići, a small place at the outskirts of Sarajevo was under the control of the Army of the Republic of Srpska. After the Dayton peace agreement was signed and so called reintegration was completed, the Serbian population collectively moved from Hadžići, to a small town of Bratunac, on the very border with Serbia. All the ties were broken and young people from both towns grew up nurtured with national history and narratives describing the "others" as enemies.

During the preparation process, the circle of participants was extended to the entire Bosnia and Herzegovina, therefore two training events gathered youngsters from those two towns



but also youth living in Bijeljina, Janja, Prijedor, Sarajevo, Trebinje, Srebrenica, Tuzla, Milići, etc.

The training team at the first training included CNA's Nedžad and Tamara together with Ismira Žilić, Zenica based colleague of ours, while the other training was facilitated by CNA's Adnan and Tamara, with the support of our Sarajevo-based colleague Nermin Karačić.

Each training event lasted for three days, during which we covered the subjects that thematized the attitude of our local communities towards the past; various strategies of relationships to the violence committed in the past (denial, justification, search for the truth, etc.); taboos that exist in our communities regarding these issues; who are our "national heroes" and how do people from other ethnic groups perceive them, etc.

One of the moments that certainly marked the first training in Milići, was the visit to the Memorial Centre in Potočari, which was initiated by the trainees.

Even though it was difficult for young people to discuss the matters of guilt, responsibility, justice or forgiveness the discussions tend to heat up quite quickly and shift from the course of "we, youngsters have nothing to do with it" to some very open and personal exchange. The most intensive talks were those regarding the question of nature and causes of the war that was waged in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the future of this country, which only showed how difficult it was for young people (and not only for them) to break free from the clichés that were imposed by the society and the communities and imagine some other approach to these questions, apart from the one expressed as: "we - Serbs" or "we - Bosniaks".

Once again it was evident how much society needed to look at the war and past and other things related to them, from the point of view of certain values that are more universal than "national questions and interests", instead of looking at them through the glasses tinted with one-sidedness and lack of empathy for other people's suffering. The training events aimed to scrape at least a little bit the existing patterns according to which the war is perceived and it seemed to us that for the people who took part at them, they were the first, really necessary chance to discuss the painful issues with people "from the other side"..

These two training events were financially supported by QPSW Sarajevo.

## **II: Training events in Tuzla and Milići**

Sarajevo office of the Nansen Dialogue Centre initiated the organization of the series of seven training events on the theme of dealing with the past, with groups of participants coming from Eastern Bosnia, or more precisely, from the municipalities of Srebrenica and Bratunac.

Four people from CNA team (Adnan, Milan, Nedžad and Tamara) are taking part in this programme, thus contributing as trainers to the work on preparation and implementation of the workshops.

The idea was to work parallel and continuously with two different groups of trainees, which would each go through three stages (three training events) of the educational programme on the theme of dealing with the past, personal and collective responsibility and peace building. The programme was planned to last through most of the 2006 and two training events have been held so far. It was an introduction to the theme and offered some basic sensitization for the issues of violence, peace building and dealing with the past.

The basic expectation from this series of training events was to offer a satisfying degree of sensitization and raising awareness on what dealing with the past means in the first place and why it is important to work on it. It was also meant to give trainees an incentive to take some more concrete steps in this field, on their own, and to become active carriers of the process, rather than just potential "supporters". The goal is a big challenge also due to many aggravating circumstances that people who work in the area of dealing with the past encounter on daily basis - the complexity of the subject deters young people from working in this area, and they are even more seriously discouraged by the attitude of their communities towards these issues, which is expressed through the readiness to apply all kinds of pressure and violence against people who dare to touch into some rigid relations and standpoints when it comes to what was really going on during the 1992-95 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Life of the youth (and the rest of the population, too) in municipalities of

Srebrenica and Bratunac brings along omnipresent patterns of relations with the "others", even though they are hardly ever voiced. They are manifested by mutual ignoring, lack of communication and avoiding which is based on mutual perception of one-self as the victim of the others. Stepping out of the existing milieu of on-going relations It is obvious that there's fear from confronting one's own community as well as need to be supported by both one's own and the "others", when we talk about.

Although some kind of heaviness was present throughout the workshops, we were encouraged to see that the participants were going through the process of realization that there was neither some other way nor a choice except cooperation and dealing with the past.

After the programme is over, we shall see how much the aim of a more active involvement of youngsters in these problems will be accomplished. Still, the very fact that the implementation of this programme gathered NDC (in the role of the organizers) and CNA (providing trainers' support) and several youth organizations from the region (Bratunac-based «Odisej», as the most prominent example) tells us that there's hope. For both more intensive work, as well as mutual cooperation of various organizations which was often praised verbally, but poorly implemented in practice.

The other two training events with the same groups of participants will be held later in September.

*We find that all this is very important and we are motivated to support, according to our capacities, every initiative that is honest in affirming a different approach and that strives to make young people true participants of these processes, instead of pushing them in a position of volunteer national workers, who "have to be apolitical" and "have nothing to do with all that".*

## DOCUMENTARY FILMS

### Promotions of the Documentaries: “Traces” and “It Can’t Last Forever”

TVBH (Bosnia and Herzegovina state-owned TV station) broadcast “Traces” (twice), as well as RTRS (Republic of Srpska state-owned TV) in prime-time. The film caused numerous reactions - mostly positive ones, but also those that were disapproving of the criticism of one’s own side. The movie was broadcasted on RTS (Radio Television of Serbia) after a longer period of time, because it took the editorial board some time to decide to broadcast it, and subsequently do it. The movie was shown in a slightly modified version.

We held a promotion of our documentary “TRACES” in Split at the end of February 2006, which was the first public screening of the film in Croatia.

Since one of the film’s protagonists (and also the organizer of the promotion) feared that the event would attract radical and to violence prone nationalists, the invitations were sent through network of personal contacts to avoid advertising in media. The attendance was poor - about 25-30 people came to see the film and talk to two of the protagonists and the author, at the “Zlatna vrata” movie theatre. The support to the film was quite evident and in accordance to the way people had been invited. The presence of a few reporters who covered the promotion enabled at least some more people to hear about the event afterwards.

There were two premiers of the documentary “It Can’t Last Forever” in February - first in Media Centre in Sarajevo and then in the Centre for Cultural Decontamination in Belgrade. The film treats the relationship between Bosniaks and Serbs, 10 years after the end of the war, unclosing the existing prejudices, fears and hopes of people from different parts of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. About 70 people attended the premiere in Sarajevo. Judging by their reactions, the film made a strong impression on them and was followed by a discussion that lasted for more than an hour. It was interesting that most of the people who participated in discussion were bothered by the nationalistic tone in a statement of a Serb woman. We feel quite satisfied with what we did as it seemed the film stroke the right note and that it could be a catalyst for a constructive discussion about the responsibility for the past and the present.

Belgrade premiere of the same film was poorly attended with only about 30 people who came to the freezing auditorium of the Centre for Cultural Decontamination. Even though the audience again liked the film very much, there’s a distinctive feeling of dissatisfaction because of the low attendance.

It is sure that if the advertising was better (besides the newspaper ad there was also a banner on a very popular The B92 News website) there would be much higher turnout. Such an ad campaign would require several thousand euros which is foolish to invest in a premiere of a documentary. If the presentations of our book in Gnjilane and Podgorica gather more than 100 people each and only 30 people show up at the film premier in Belgrade, with its population of 2 million, it is clear that we should not make any more public promotions in Belgrade. Instead, we should broadcast the film on TV stations which gives the wider public a chance to see it if they are interested in it. It is quite likely that this kind of event would have much more audience in smaller towns and that it would be easier to initiate discussions in those circumstances and get the idea of what kind of impression film leaves on the audience.

## About New Films

### Film "All Wish to Cast a Stone"

All wish to cast a stone, while nobody wants to realize how guilty they are for everything - these are the words of the Croat combatant voiced in the documentary that thematizes the relations between people with Croatian and Serbian identity. It is the second film in the «simulated dialogue» series with people on different sides and it hasn't had a public premiere yet, but its working version was shown at the seminar for former combatants as well as to many friends whose comments helped shape the final version of the film.

The initial reactions tell us that we managed to make a film that initiates people to think about responsibility regarding the past and its reflections in the presence, i.e. responsible social action now for the sake of an honest attitude towards the past, but also for prevention of future violence. People who appear in the film are those who lost their dear ones, those who had been exiled from their homes and either returned home or didn't, people who suffered from violence due to the pressure they were exposed to when they had to choose between their parents' descent, to line up to whatever side they were on, those who carried a gun in the war, young musicians, schoolteacher, a cabinet member, brave, ordinary people.

The premiere of the film is going to be held in the fall, at several public screenings in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and later it will be offered for broadcasting to TV stations.

### The new one is being filmed and it's not in vain

The production of the third film of the series of «simulated dialogues» thematizing the relations between Croatians and Bosniaks, started in June. We have shot about 20 interviews so far, several of which were done with Croat refugees from Bosnia who are now living in the Dalmatian hinterland. About ten years ago, this area had been populated mainly with Serbs, most of which did not return to their homes. The experience we had with Bosnian Croats, now settled in Croatia, was quite contrary to the wide spread stereotypes regarding their reserve and mistrust towards other communities. We were received with open arms and witnessed that most of them lived very hard now. What these people carry inside is sadness and nostalgia for their homeland, just like all the others who share similar fate.

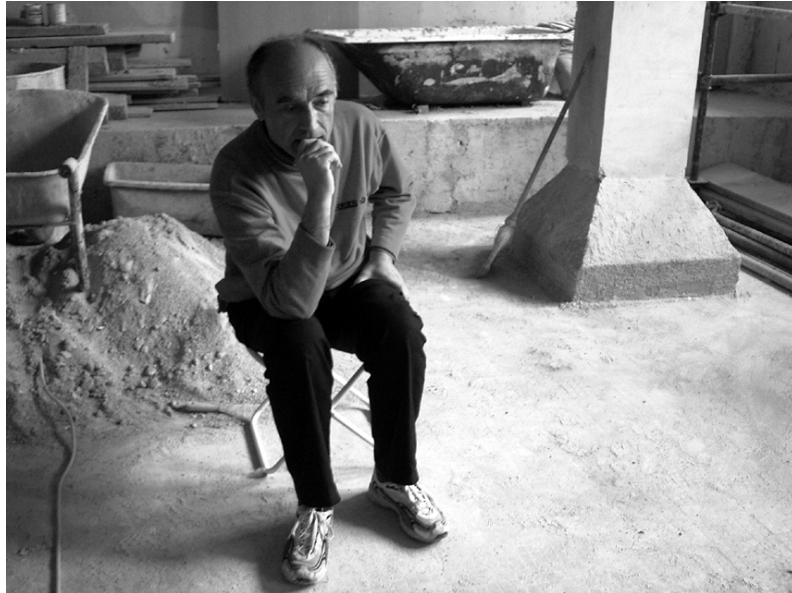
The most of the interviews with people from both communities were recorded in Bosnia. We could feel a great anguish amongst people in Mostar who live in a community where it seems that little has changed since the war while an enormous ethnic gap, mistrust, lack of communication and fear continue to exist.

We had similar feelings while we were making previous films: there was a desire to bring these people together, to make them listen to each other and feel the pain of one another, to recognize the common misfortune and find the future together. We heard a lot of prejudices, plenty of things that were uttered about the «other ones» when the camera was off, but witnessing their torment didn't leave any space for condemnation, but merely for a question about the reasons for the way they were thinking.



The three of us who were in the team, travelling, meeting people, talking to them and recording them became rather tired of it all. It was not just a physical fatigue, but satiety of misery. It was hard for us, but I believe it was worth it.

We had an enormous motivation that came out of many meetings with people who had by coincidence seen our previous film "Traces", since it was shown 3 times on TV in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These people presumed that we might be the authors of the film and we received many praises and gratitude for such an honest work which made us really happy. Well, it seems that it wasn't in vain, after all.



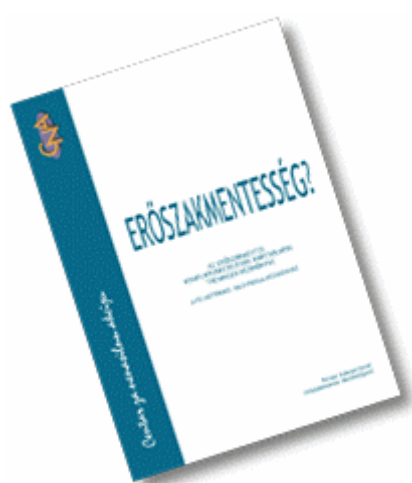
## BOOKS

### Manual „Nonviolence?” For Work With Adults In Nonviolent Conflict Transformation Translated To Hungarian Language - ”Erőszakmentesség?”

*Published in November 2005*

Until 2005, we have issued the Manual “Nonviolence?” in Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian (2000), Macedonian (2001), Albanian language (2002), and now we can proudly announce that it is available in Hungarian language, too. There is a great demand for this edition, originally titled “Erőszakmentesség?”, that we really haven’t expected to this extent.

Initiative to translate the manual came from the organization called Zenith Workshop (Zenith Műhely) from Subotica, therefore the whole process was organized in cooperation with them and Berghof Stiftung supported the idea financially.



*For the first time, we've organized the promotion/presentation of the Manual and even more importantly, we sent copies to some primary and secondary schools in Vojvodina (where the Hungarian language is used). Promotions were quite poorly attended, but it was important that people from education and media came, which was exactly our main target group. Promotions were held in three cities in Vojvodina: Subotica, Novi Sad and Bečej, where there was great interest for both the Manual in Hungarian as well as the one in Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian language.*

When we were distributing the Manual to primary and secondary schools, the response was excellent: people from schools called, asking if they could get some more copies in Hungarian and Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian language, thanking us for the copies we had sent, telling us how valuable it was for their work etc.

We received especially affirmative feedback about the Manual from people who teach civil education. That is, within that subject they cover the theme of nonviolence, for which there isn't any literature available at all, not in Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian language, let alone Hungarian. Recently, we've received a phone call from a pedagogue in a secondary school in Vojvodina who said that we encouraged him to teach nonviolence within the curriculum of civil education, not just for half a semester, but for an entire one! And that is not the only case.

We've got the impression that promoting the Manual and sending it to schools doesn't mean that we've just promoted the Manual, but work on peace building in general, which should be more visible in public. This time it was achieved, which is especially important in the current circumstances in Vojvodina.

The Manual in Hungarian is a valuable experience for us. We're glad that the initiative to translate it was proposed by some other, local organization, like in this case, by Zenith

Mühely Workshop from Subotica, with whom we had a good feeling of cooperation and understanding, that was unfolding more and more as cooperation continued. Apart from that, it was new to us to present such a publication in public and in schools, and to see the reactions. We've really received a lot of support for our work which means a lot to us. Finally, since there's such an interest in peace work, there's hope that the potential ugly scenario will not happen in Vojvodina, hence that life with constant tension, lack of everyday communication among people with different ethnic identity, submission to political manipulations with ethnic background, moving population to the areas where they are the majority, etc. will not become a part of day-to-day life in Vojvodina.

### The book «I cannot feel well if my neighbour does not»

*Published in the second half of January 2006.*

The book «I cannot feel well if my neighbour does not» is, just to remind, a collection of interviews with people throughout former Yugoslavia, coming from different backgrounds and diverse in terms of age, profession, gender, ethnicity. They speak of the past, view the present and share their hopes, fears and wishes for the future. The book is published in Serbian/Croat/Bosnian language, Macedonian and Albanian language.

There were six promotions of the book, in the following cities: Skoplje, Sarajevo, Belgrade, Podgorica, Osijek and Gnjilane, that took place from the end of January to mid-February. We organized those in Belgrade and Sarajevo ourselves, while the promotions in other cities were organized by our collaborators.

Promotion in Skoplje was organized by the *First Children's Embassy "Međaši"* where we were presenting the book together with professor Ferid Muhić. About forty persons attended the event, most of them NGO activists together with some people who work in media and education. The media coverage of the promotion was quite well.

Promotion in Sarajevo didn't gather too many people, only about 15 showed up but we were surprised with the big media interest. Two state-owned TV stations, BHT1 and FTV reported from the promotion, and some of the most popular dailies ran information about it. The book was presented by our colleague Adnan Hasanbegović, than our cooperation partner Anita Grabner from Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje who was one of the interviewers, and author and journalist from Sarajevo, Ivan Lovrenović. Very inspirational discussion that followed, revolved about the book, the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the meaning of reconciliation in our region.

Even though we had expected only a few people would turn up at the Belgrade promotion (mostly acquaintances and those close to us) and an overall disinterest, it turned out that there were about forty people, 10 of which were from the media. A psychologist and politician from Belgrade, Vera Marković and director of the Centre for Cultural Decontamination, Borka Pavićević presented the book together with us. We were taken by surprise with the invitation from the producers of «Belgrade Chronicles», daytime programme of RTS (Serbian TV), to appear in the show and announce the promotion. As for the printed media, it seems that only the "Danas" daily published an article, which was no surprise.

Quite unexpectedly, but the promotion in Podgorica, Montenegro was a big hit, partly because the group of Montenegrin peace activists had done a great job organizing it, and we must especially mention the efforts of Lidija Zeković. The vice president of the



Parliament of Montenegro, Rifat Rastoder, and representative of the Nansen Dialogue Centre, Ivana Gajović spoke at the promotion together with the organizers. The public library auditorium was full. There were about 90-100 persons in the audience, people with various professional background: NGO activists, "officials", people from the media, artists, etc. State-owned TV channel reported from the event, and almost all the dailies ran articles about it. Local daily "Republika" published interviews as a part of their feuilleton.

Promotion in Osijek, Croatia was organized by the *Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights, Osijek (Centar za mir, nenasilje i ljudska prava Osijek -CZMOS)*. Professor Ladislav Bognar and Velibor Zirojević from CZMOS, presented the book. According to his own words, professor Bognar was deeply inspired by the book and he had prepared a Power Point presentation about it which was very colourful and motivating. Unfortunately, this promotion was the least attended. Maybe that's why the conversation with the audience looked more like a workshop held in a cosy atmosphere. We are not sorry for organizing it, at least for the people who came and to whom it really meant a lot.

The big hall of the "Kristal" Hotel in Gnjilane, Kosovo was packed with people. There were about 80 seats taken and a number of people remained standing. The promotion was organized by the Action against Violence and for Peace Building, Gnjilane (*Aksioni Kundër Dhunës dhe Ndërtimi i Paqës, ANP*). Besides us, there were Adem Demaçi and our friend and collaborator, Gazmend Murseli from ANP who gave speeches. Our friend Nexhat Ismaili was translating the discussions simultaneously. Book promotion was turned into a conference that lasted more than two and a half hours and there were a lot of people who wanted to continue conversations afterwards.

### **Where Can You Find the Book**

Belgrade: Centre for Nonviolent Action Belgrade Office ([cna.beograd@nenasilje.org](mailto:cna.beograd@nenasilje.org))  
Sarajevo: Centre for Nonviolent Action Sarajevo Office ([cna.sarajevo@nenasilje.org](mailto:cna.sarajevo@nenasilje.org))  
Skoplje: The First Children's Embassy "Međasi" ([gordanaz@childrensembassy.org.mk](mailto:gordanaz@childrensembassy.org.mk))  
Gnjilane: ANP ([anp\\_kos@yahoo.com](mailto:anp_kos@yahoo.com))  
Osijek: CZMOS ([katarina.kruhonja@os.htnet.hr](mailto:katarina.kruhonja@os.htnet.hr))  
Podgorica: Please, contact Lidija Zeković ([lzekovic@gmail.com](mailto:lzekovic@gmail.com))

In case the «distributors» have already administered all the books, try finding them in major libraries in those cities. It is quite possible that our cooperation partners have already managed to deliver books to other libraries in bigger cities, throughout the country. The book should have reached the main libraries in the following towns in Serbia: Aranđelovac, Aleksandrovac, Bačka Topola, Zemun, Belgrade, Bečej, Bor, Bujanovac, Valjevo, Vranje, Vrbas, Vršac, Gornji Milanovac, Zaječar, Zrenjanin, Indija, Jagodina, Kikinda, Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Kruševac, Leskovac, Ljig, Medveđa, Negotin, Niš, Novi Pazar, Novi sad, Pančevo, Piroć, Požarevac, Preševo, Priboj, Prijepolje, Prokuplje, Raška, Sjenica, Smederevo, Sombor, Sremska Mitrovica, Subotica, Užice, Čačak, Šabac, Šid and some others.

In case the library in the place where you live doesn't have the book, and you think it should, i.e. the book would have its readership, let us know so we can send copies before we give them all away.

### **The Work on the Publication «Reflections and Experiences in the Field of Peace Building, Ten Years After the War»**

As we have announced in the last three-month report in February, we started implementing quite an old idea of ours about the publication that would collect different activist and exploratory experiences in the field of peace building from the region of former Yugoslavia.



We should add that many of our colleagues from the region of former Yugoslavia supported this intention, therefore at this moment the articles that will make the skeleton of this book are being made. The process of collecting texts is regrettably, more lengthy than we have planned.

To remind, the chosen umbrella subjects are: peace education, dealing with the past and peace building, nonviolence, activism, civil society, demilitarization, sex/gender equality and peace building, nationalism, (non)visibility of peace work etc.

We will be able to discuss and analyze the actual reach of this book and the extent to which the achieved «product» responds to the initial idea in several months time, but it is worth mentioning that the concept/desire/aspiration behind this book is to contribute to affirmation of peace work *as such* while at the same time it should offer critical analysis of strategies, approaches and positions we chose while doing the peace work.

The book is planned to be published in Spring 2007.

We publish for the first time the editorial of Paul Stubbs.

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### **Civil Society or *Ubleha*?: reflections on flexible concepts, meta-NGOs and new social energy in the post-Yugoslav space.**

"To speak for others is to first silence those in whose name we speak"<sup>1</sup>

#### **MAGICAL PANACEA OR EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES?**

Nowadays, in the post-Yugoslav space, it appears that we may finally be able to discuss the concept of 'civil society' in more critical terms, following over a decade of uncritical usage in which the term became synonymous with all things virtuous, progressive, democratic, and just. There are some specific, parochial reasons for this, notably the possibilities opened up by a post-war discursive problematic in which the 'magical' claims for civil society as a panacea have lost both their strategic importance and their ideological currency. In the global context, the rise of what, in shorthand terms, I will name the 'critical globalization movement' has, sometimes in some incarnations, laid claims to being the precursor of a meaningful 'global civil society', although more often it has dismissed the concept as insufficiently radical. Moreover, the movement has been explicitly sceptical of the tokenistic consultations with so-called 'civil society stakeholders' increasingly embraced by powerful supranational agencies such as the World Bank which appear, at best, to be half-hearted responses to the long-term legitimization crisis which they face.

For me, the concept of 'civil society' has always appeared most interesting, if also most problematic, at the interface or 'contact zone'<sup>2</sup> between the specific, in this case the post-Yugoslav space, and the global. This contact zone is highly charged precisely because this was not a simple case of a concept being imported from the all-powerful West into an empty space even though, at times, it may have appeared as such. I well remember workshops in the late 1990s where some local NGO members revealed that they first encountered the concept in the languages and practices of one international aid agency or another. Rather, it is a classic case of a set of translation practices in which the term

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<sup>1</sup> Callon, M. (1986) 'Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation' in Law, J. (ed) *Power, Action and Belief: a new sociology of knowledge*. London: Routledge, p. 216.

<sup>2</sup> 'Contact zones' involve „the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect”, Pratt, M. L. (1992) *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, p 6.

moves, often in complex, unexpected ways, across sites, spaces, scales and levels<sup>3</sup>. In this process, agents and agencies are of vital importance in the transformation of the 'raw' or 'bland' concept into a set of meaningful and more or less powerful policy prescriptions, project designs and technologies of implementation. Perhaps even more importantly, a new group of intermediaries, brokers or, beyond the literal meaning of the term, translators emerge, gaining power and influence from their abilities to work across and between languages, contexts, sites, levels and agencies.

Here, I want to address some of the complexity in the usage of the term 'civil society' in the post-Yugoslav space. In particular, I want to explore some of the ironies in the transnational movement of the concept into and out of that space over time. I also want to touch on, and attempt to go beyond, the by now well-known problem of the reduction of civil society to Non-Governmental Organisations by exploring the role of some of the meta-NGOs which have arisen in the post-Yugoslav context. Finally, I want to outline some of the pre-conditions for a reinvigorated public sphere in terms of new forms of social energy.

(...)

Paul Stubbs

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<sup>3</sup> I am using the concept of 'translation' here based on work by Noemi Lendvai, cf. Lendvai, N. Lendvai, N. (2005) 'Remaking European Governance: transition, accession and integration.' In Newman, J. (ed.) (2005) *Remaking Governance: Peoples, politics and the public sphere*. Bristol, The Policy Press, and as developed by John Clarke, cf. Clarke, J. (2005) 'What's culture got to do with it?', Paper presented to seminar 'Anthropological approaches to studying welfare', Aarhus, Denmark, November.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

### Workshop in Wustrow, Germany

*October 24 - 31, 2005*

Meetings of peace activists who work on peace building in different parts of the world almost always bring along exchange of experiences, learning from others and a chance for self-reflection. Two people from CNA team had such a chance on the workshop organized by Kurwe that took place in Wustrow, from October 24 to 31. We worked with people from Germany, France, Palestine, East Timor and Macedonia.

While getting to know different contexts of post-conflict societies, through work with "foreigners" who are engaged in peace building, as well as with local peace activists, we had a chance to re-examine some of our approaches, think about other, different ways to work on peace building and to offer some of our "learning points" to the others and at the same time draw some parallels with our experiences and the context we came from.

Besides all this, the meeting motivated us in a slightly unusual way. Without an intention to be at least bit cynical, we think that stepping out of our everyday lives and realizing that our post-war surroundings are not the worst in the world, motivated us to think in terms of "we can do it!" instead of just "we must do it".

### Training in Bielefeld, Germany

*April 20 - 30, 2006*

Umbruch (Bildungswerk für Friedenspolitik und gewaltfreie Veränderung) - Dortmund based organization, initiated a gathering of peace activists from Germany, Turkey, Russia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, who are engaged in various programs of peace education. Ivana (CNA Belgrade) and Tamara (CNA Sarajevo) took part at the training, representing CNA.

Basic idea of the training was to gather in one place people who are engaged in peace education, working with different kind of groups, using different approaches, and to make use of the meeting for an exchange of methods, approaches and values that guide us in our work.

One may think that when the group is made of 18 very experienced activists, the group process will go smoothly and the desired priorities will be established easily. This time, however, it was not the case and this gathering gave us a chance to practice our own constructive communication skills, decision making and dealing with group dynamics which was really tiring at times. A certain ambiguity with respect to the nature of this meeting and sometimes clumsy drifting between an attempt to make this event a space for exchange and support and a set-up that resembled quite a lot to some decision making exercise as a part of the early phase of the training for trainers program, made us very tired and took away lot of valuable time. Anyway, there was time to get insights into the variety of social contexts and different strategies that we choose in our work, accordingly. Group's diversity and variety of focal points helped opening up a truly wide space with plenty of possibilities for an individual to find basis for both reflexion and self-reflexion, to thematize issues that concern people and to get plenty of energy and inspiration to hang in.

Anyway, just as this experience has showed us that there are no countries nor societies that can say with the clean conscience that they don't need any form of peace activism and public action and reaction against violence (like for example discrimination of minorities, police violence, various «deals» that the state makes to the detriment of people and nature, etc.), just as there are no activists who cannot learn from experiences of other people and societies (willingness and desire to learn, are entirely separate matters, though). Seeing how people from Germany are dealing with the past or how peace groups from Turkey find ways to react and deal with militarism that has permeated all aspects of their society was very important to us and we hope that our participation contributed not

only to describe the context in which we work but to inspire people and energize them towards new ideas and initiatives related to the theme of dealing with the past.

## «Architecture of Peace»

*Peace conference, Novi Sad, Vojvodina, November 9 -13, 2005*

The conference dedicated to war experiences and chances of building sustainable peace was held as a part of the gathering of psychology students of former Yugoslavia, at the University of Novi Sad. The assembly was organized by the Psychology Students' Club «traNSfer» and Centre for War Trauma, both from Novi Sad, who had invited members of CNA team to conduct a one-day workshop on the theme of "violence and peace building" as a part of the conference.

Concept of the conference was designed as a series of lectures, workshops and forums on different themes related to context of peace building and psycho-social processes and phenomena.

Tamara Šmidling and Adnan Hasanbegović from CNA facilitated the workshop attended by fifteen people from the region. It was quite inspirational to discuss the themes of violence and peace building and problems related to the phenomenon such are nationalism, crime, discrimination and like. In their comments participants pointed out that the workshop was empowering and stimulating for them when it comes to more thorough reflection on activism and peace building.

We also took part officially in another activity. It was the forum on the theme of: *contribution of the war veterans to peace building* which included.

Guests of the conference had a chance to see the documentary about the war veterans, «Traces» which was produced by CNA. After the film, there was the debate about it and the discussion with some of its protagonists, Marko Martinić, Nermin Karačić and Novica Kostić. The importance of this event lies also, among other things, in that fact that it links the academic circles with the people, themes and activities related to peace building which is not usually the case with similar gatherings that are held in this region. This meeting gave a good example and underlined the importance of the engagement of students and professors in the field of peace work and making a link between theory and actual social activities. More details about the event are available from the organizers: Psychology Students' Club «traNSfer» (at [www.transfer.org.yu](http://www.transfer.org.yu)) and Centre for War Trauma (at [www.wartrauma.org.yu](http://www.wartrauma.org.yu)).

## 16 Days of Activism

*Sarajevo, November 25 - December 10, 2005*

*Foundation CURE, Conscientious Objection, Q Association, ACIPS, QPSW...*

16 Days of Activism against gender/sexual violence is a global, international campaign that takes place every year between November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) and December 10 (International Human Rights Day).

This year for the first time, we have participated actively in the organization of 16 Days of Activism in Sarajevo, together with the whole bunch of organizations, informal groups and individuals from Sarajevo (and elsewhere) with whom we're bonded by activist awareness and a desire to give this town and its streets a bit of a shake down and to stir up sleepy and apathetic conscious of its citizens.

During those 16 days various street actions, performances, concerts, workshops, plays, forums, and media appearances were achieved. Their main goal was to focus the public attention to the problems of violence against women, children, minorities, poor...

The action which was organized literally with the bare minimum of funds, lot of enthusiasm, and a desire to make some noise about things that are otherwise ignored and kept in, was sometimes lacking organization, coordination and clear vision about desired/possible results - still, the event that lasted for several days made *activism* present, visible and loud in Sarajevo, on daily basis. Even if it was imperfect, often chaotic, left to the instantaneous individual inspiration - it would still be absolutely necessary for

this society that was lacking the energy to *react* to anything at all (unless grumbling in front of a TV set is considered as some kind of reaction).

## **Seminar: The Others - From Patriarchal Construction to Alternative Policy**

*Banja Vrujci, Serbia, April 14-18, 2006*

Centre for Promotion of Culture of Nonviolence and Equal Rights - Queeria, in cooperation with Women in Black organized a four-day seminar for activists of Serbian nongovernmental organizations and political parties. Seminar thematized the following themes: identities, violence, militarism, homophobia and alternative policy, aiming to contribute to change of value systems and disintegration of militarism and patriarchal constructions. Additional goals of the organizers were bringing together people who work in different local communities in Serbia and building capacities for potential cooperation. The training team included: Boban Stojanović, Ksenija Forca and Predrag Azdejković of Queeria, and Ivana Franović from CNA, as the guest trainer.

It was interesting to see that the group of participants (mainly from NGO-s, since no one from any political party neither applied nor showed up) were more sensitized for the themes of the seminar than it had been the case with other seminars/training events, therefore it wasn't necessary to work on basic sensitization of participants. This certainly isn't the result of the changes that have happened in the society, but has more to do with the role that the LGBT organization played in organization of this seminar.

The publication with the same title: "The Others - From Patriarchal Construction to Alternative Policy", was published as a part of this project. It's a collection of articles that consists of three chapters: "Parricidal Construction", "Negative Aspects" and "Alternative Policy". If you are interested to receive the publication, please contact Queeria, on the following e-mail address: [queeria@gmail.com](mailto:queeria@gmail.com)

## **Establishing the Truth in the Post-Conflict Period: Initiatives and Perspectives in the West Balkans**

*Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, May 5-6, 2006*

The international conference «Establishing the Truth in the Post-Conflict Period: Initiatives and Perspectives in the West Balkans» was held in Sarajevo as a result of cooperation of the Research Documentation Centre (Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina), the Humanitarian Law Centre (Belgrade, Serbia) and Documenta (Zagreb, Croatia). CNA's Adnan and Nedžad took part at the conference.

There were about 150 people on the list of speakers and participants, coming from the region of former Yugoslavia as well as abroad. Amongst them were: Carla Del Ponte, Hague Tribunal's chief prosecutor, Martin Raguž, Chairman of the House of the Representatives of BiH Parliamentary Assembly, Medžida Kreso, President of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Refik Hodžić, former head of the ICTY Outreach Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina and film director, and many others ...

The following themes were discussed at the conference: work of the Hague Tribunal, work of the special division of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina for war crimes, necessity of regional approach to work on dealing with the past, present situation of the victims and associations of families of the victims and missing persons. The theme that the participants also found very interesting was adoption of the law for establishing the Truth Commission by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly. Besides, aspirations to establish the truth often come as a result of either the need to «prove» one's own truth or to «deny» other's, without any intention to search for it together or tendency to establish a constructive dialogue about the past.

At the end of the conference, the conclusion was reached that his type of regional meeting could mean an encouragement for further work on dealing with the past and that after such meetings were held in Belgrade and Sarajevo, there would be at least one similar event in Croatia. We hope that it will be a chance to discuss «how and when we are going to do ...» rather than just «it should be done ... on dealing with the past» so that we do not organize conferences for their own sake.

## Workshop on «Trauma and Reconciliation»

*Sarajevo, January 27-29, 2006*

(CNA Sarajevo in cooperation with Mennonite Central Committee)

It is certain that trauma and its consequences are a part of the most difficult war “legacy” of our region, whose burden most of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and wider region of former Yugoslavia continue to feel and carry around in both direct and indirect way. We often encounter traces of trauma, both in our work and in day-to-day, live communication with people. Signs of trauma manifest on different, sometimes quite unexpected levels. Therefore, we’ve decided to deepen our knowledge about the subject, with special emphasis on connection between the fact that our societies are traumatized and the need to start the reconciliation process within those societies. What is the mutual relation between trauma and reconciliation and what are the challenges that trauma poses in front of that already difficult process - those were the two key questions that we were dealing with during the two and a half days of the training.

Eleven trainees, from Serbia and BiH attended the workshop which was facilitated by Amela and Rendi Puljek-Shank (MCC SEE). After this second training on trauma that we have completed, we consider it is important to point out that we do not draw motivation to work on this subject from our desire to “cure” and be therapists, but that it comes out of our need for a comprehensive understanding of social processes in which we are protagonists, as well. In some cases, those processes cannot be understood without taking into account a sad fact that destinies of thousands of people who had been killed, wounded, exiled and humiliated, surely left some trace in hearts and minds of those who are today expected to deal with the past, apologise, forgive, reconcile...

## ACTIVITIES OF OUR PARTNERS

### The «React!» Group

#### «Half a Month in Someone Else's Shoes»

*Cities in Vojvodina, October - December, 2005*



It has been two years and a half since the «React!» group was formed in Vojvodina. It came as a result of the need that not so few people from Vojvodina had to react to different forms of violence in their communities. Ethnic, religious and cultural violence that happens on daily basis everywhere around us, offers many reasons to constantly react, struggle, mark and publicly condemn which is exactly what the «React!» group does almost every day, through different actions, announcements, mailing lists and exchange of information. The presence and transparency that the group promulgates has done a lot for bringing some very important themes for public discussion (the attitude of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Patriarch towards women, introduction of church-state tax for the building of the St. Sava church, neo-Nazis busting the anti-fascist forum in Novi Sad, etc.) in the territory of Vojvodina and elsewhere in Serbia. The group Good managed to provide good media coverage and support of their initiatives.

CNA supports the group's work from the very beginning (two CNA team members were among the founders) by participating in their actions, both with our resources and financially, according to our capacities. In the beginning the group gathered just about ten people who attended some of CNA training events, but in the meantime it has grown and spread out to several cities in Vojvodina (thanks to communication over the mailing-list) mainly due to a very dedicated and motivated work of the people who make the core of the group. It's not unimportant that the group operates on the voluntary basis, without fees and with minimum of funds that are provided by the people who engage their own capacities, from small donations CNA managed to provide and from donations of some institutions from Vojvodina.

In the last three months of 2005, they organized many actions under the common title "Half a Month in Someone Else's Shoes" which were concentrated on inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina. Novi Sad, Zrenjanin, Pančevo, Kikinda, Novi Bečej, Bačka Palanka were just some of the towns where the activities took place in the form of round tables, forums, painting over graffiti, broadcasting radio jingles, distributing leaflets, creating web-site and street actions and there were over 40 of them implemented. CNA financially supported some of them.

We are very much encouraged with the readiness and motivation of these people to publicly and loudly speak against violence and for promotion of values like understanding, differences, solidarity and social justice. It is often neither easy nor harmless and it requires a lot of courage and mutual support. Time that these activists invest in better future of all of us is worth our admiration, support and joining, especially since we spent our lives in a constant struggle to provide for a bare existence, due to the process of social, economic and cultural transition that we live in. More information about the group "React" can be found on the Web Site [www.reaguj.co.yu](http://www.reaguj.co.yu).



## **Training in Basics of Nonviolent Conflict Transformation with Participants from Kosovo and Serbia**

*Tivat, Montenegro, November 7-13, 2005*

Training in nonviolent conflict transformation with participants from Serbia and Kosovo was held in the "Palma" hotel in Tivat, Montenegro from November 7-13, 2005.

The initiative for the implementation of this training originally came from the trainees of the last Training for Trainers Program, which had been held in 2003/2004: Nina Vukosavljević and Bojan Veselić from Belgrade, Nexhat Ismajli from Gnjilane and our colleague Sanja Deanković. At the same time, all of them were members of the training team of this training. The activity was financially supported by CNA Belgrade, i.e. by BMZ.

When the idea for this training was conceived we were under the strong impression of what was going on in Kosovo in March 2004. After some sporadic and localized conflicts many non-Albanians were exiled from Kosovo and the events that followed lead to destruction of property that was believed to be in connection to Albanian ethnic community or to religious identity of the majority of Albanians. We wanted to support social engagement of the future carriers of social changes as well as to contribute to establishment of conditions to encourage inter-ethnic dialogue.

At the beginning of the training it was especially the case with discussions about the present relations between those two ethnic groups, therefore the refuge was taken in putting more emphasis on "Roma question" in Serbia and Kosovo, which was on the other hand, really important to trainees of Roma ethnic background.

However, as time went by, the atmosphere of mutual trust was established amongst the participants, both during the workshops and informal time they were spending together.

All of that created safer space for mutual confrontation and ample discussions on the theme of violence and prejudices, where people very clearly articulated what bothered them about the deeds and behaviour of the others as well as how they perceived situation in Kosovo and how they felt about the beginning of negotiations on Kosovo status.

We were under the impression that many people from the group truly made an effort to understand the position of those with different identity from their own.

Culmination of the training was the workshop on the theme of "identity", which was designed in a way to make participants "switch" identities and talk about the experience of other person's ethnic identity. We find that this was one of the biggest values of this training. That was expressed after the workshops and in both written and oral evaluations of the whole training, because for most people it was the first chance they had to meet ethnic Albanian, i.e. Serb.

We are sorry that there was only one ethnic Serb who lives in Kosovo in the trainees' group, because we think that participation of more Serbs from Kosovo would give the training and additional quality.

Training was held in Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian language, which is not a mother tongue for most people from Kosovo, and we want to underline how important and visible was the effort of people from Kosovo to talk and help each other to articulate better what they had to say.

After the experience gathered on creating and facilitating this training, it seems to us that there should be much more activities like that and chances for people from Kosovo and Serbia to spend time together, get to know each other and demystify and understand the true meaning of identity of the 'other' as well as all the things that come out of that, because our social and political reality is burdened with fear, prejudices, stereotypes and discrimination and other forms of violence against members of ethnic and religious groups who are minorities in those societies.



# THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT WITHIN WHICH CNA WORKS

## About the Context of Peace Work in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Although the title of the article indicates that the focus should be on peace work, I will allow the everyday experience of life and work in Bosnia and Herzegovina to drag me away from the previous task, therefore I will deal more with the context of life and any kind of work in this country.

I admit it took me weeks to finish this peace, while waiting to hear the results of yet another "historically important election" and secretly hoping that some changes were about to happen and shake up this unsound system to its very core (although neither the candidate's lists, the voters' disposition nor the pre-election prognosis pointed out to the possibility of such an overthrow).

However, election is over. This time, I do not intend to get into the electoral and post-electoral arithmetic, percentages, speculations about possible coalitions, etc. I'm much more interested to make a short review of the things this election *really* brought to the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and how many *new* and *different* things they brought along.

Just for the record, the attendance at the election was 54,48%, which means that only a little more than half of the electoral body paved the way for the next four years. It's nothing new or surprising - since long time ago it was known that very small percentage of population of BH vote, therefore various pro-election campaigns that invite people to participate at the election cannot make those tired or disinterested ones get involved in politics.

And the choice of one half of the electorate (which the other half confirmed by their passive attitude) in the part of Bosnia and Herzegovina known as the Republic of Srpska is called 'changes', since the eternal Serbian Democratic Party was ousted by the Alliance of Independent Social Democrats of Milorad Dodik in an convincing election victory. However, the use of the term 'change' is highly inadequate when we comment the results of the election in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina where the nationalistic discourse became even more radical since the most of the votes went to the unavoidable Party of the Democratic Action and to Haris Silajdžić with its all - time favourite Party for BH, and to the old and the new Croatian Democratic Unions that assume the right to speak in the name of all the Croats living in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

What happened at the election in the Republic of Srpska could hardly be called a change, if by that term we meant the change of the nationalistic pattern that the entire realm of the Republic of Srpska has been drawing from. The steaming nationalistic and chauvinistic fervour whose main themes were composed in Milorad Dodik electoral head office resulted in the symptoms such as: high nationalistic pulse, blood pressure and temperature, all embodied in the personage of Haris Silajdžić, Bosnia's favourite "saviour". The leadership of so called "parties with Croatian national token", as they are called in local political slang, did not miss out taking part in this circus, trying with all their might to show that it was them who suffered the most in the dungeon of (Croatian) people. It's like a merry go round. It's such a cliché to repeat over and again that there is no real change in it without an actual desire to save what can be saved from the puddle we all stand in. But the political elites and great majority of those who support them do not share the same desire because it means that they will have to set their own houses in order first.

The most interesting thing happened with the election of the Croatian member of the Presidency, since the Social Democratic Party candidate won. It's the party that tries to create an image which is contrary to the notorious "national tokens of any provenance". The fact that Željko Komšić won surprised many people (including me) and brought some week hope that the insane terror of "ethnic principle" may be evaded and that we can act subversively against it, that it is possible that people who carry a certain ethnic identity vote for someone with different ethnic identity from their own because they value that

person as more capable, competent, etc. in comparison to the other candidates. Other people are sceptical about the possible consequences of such political manoeuvre, which was already described as «politically cunning, but not politically wise» (comment of Ivan Lovrenović for the «Dani» daily) since they predict further strains of inter-ethnic relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (especially between Bosniaks and Croats). It's already become obvious that it's not enough to outsmart the system in order to weaken the "ethnic principle", but it is necessary to have a clear vision how this system can be changed radically. Judging by the reactions to this "political cunningness" both direct (coming from the Catholic church, Croatian parties, Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and indirect (attacks on the mosques in Mostar and Kiseljak), a lot of water will flow beneath the bridge in Bosnia before this monstrous structure is deconstructed.

While politicians are handling "big national interest that our lives depend upon" other numerous problems of this society sink into oblivion after being briefly lit up by the blinding spotlights of election campaigns and promises. Who will remember hungry workers, pensioners who invest most of their energy into bare survival with a monthly income of 150 KM (about 75 €), rape victims, jobless single mothers without any prospects, returnees left to their own devices in their homes that were never finished, with only a few sheep and whole bunch of fears and unprocessed traumas; pupils who begin their every school year later than planned while the only pattern they are offered in large quantities is violence of all kinds; people who are still trying to find the remains of their dear ones, more than ten years after the war?

Who's going to remember all of them when we have to deal with more important stuff such as for instance vital and less vital national interests...

The last election in Bosnia and Herzegovina neither brought some visible progress nor the promise of it; it is certain that the on-going conflicts were taken to the higher level and it became more obvious that without resolving these problems it would really be impossible to make any step forward in all areas.

Talking about economic advance and development seems to be an illusion in the country with bad infrastructure, where only about 10 kilometres of new highways is being built per year, where it is impossible to introduce or implement any kind of law that is intended to support the recovery of the domestic economy.

Farmers who have been protesting for more than a year in front of the Presidency building in Sarajevo, became some kind of a bizarre decorous, ignored by the majority, while they serve as a reminder to others how absurd life is in a country where almost nothing is being produced, while those few products that are manufactured must be thrown away because they cannot compete with cheap imported goods.

International community which is absolutely powerless to do anything intelligent here, asks a legitimate question: who should the future of this country lie upon? - Thus shifting the responsibility (quite correctly in theory) to local politicians and citizens, forgetting about their own big responsibility for "solidified" current situation. Christian Schwartz-Schilling, the current High Representative of the international community in BH, is said to be the last person holding that position. That will result in a drastic reduction of various international organizations and institutions in BH. It will be very interesting to see how those who until recently have been slapped (and punched) by the representatives of international community will convince themselves that they are capable and willing to make responsible decisions for the well being of this society. And how will the citizens, accustomed to someone else taking care of all that, punish them for all the possible mistakes, misuse and frauds?

Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina irresistibly resembles to a big balloon that got out of hands of those who were holding on to it (international community, local authorities, population of BH?), and is about to burst into thousand little peaces, due to some internal tensions. In such an environment, many organizations, associations and groups who are (whether is justified or not) recognised as the main carriers of the process of peace building, who on the other hand, are encountering lot of problems like: dependency on foreign financial support that is growing smaller, designing programs according to donors' wishes, lack of vision and idea in their activities, NGOs' disastrous public image and their own lack of sensitization to discuss the matter openly, activists' fatigue and weariness, lack of visible results after years of work, etc.

Due to everything stated earlier, the society of BH needs to understand that peace building is its top priority, and that the actors of this process, besides NGO, can be (and actually are) artists, journalists, teachers, students, pensioners, returnees, refugees, neighbours, professors, policemen, bystanders ... all those who care at least a little bit how we are going to live in the future and to whom it's not all the same that we are up to our ears in violence.

Tamara Šmidling, CNA

## Croatia

The most precise description of the situation in Croatia would probably be to say that nothing essentially new, revolutionary or surprising has happened in the past year. There were neither turns nor upheavals; nothing to surprise those even remotely familiar with what was going on in Croatia and the neighbouring countries. One might say that it was just another regular year.

Perhaps it should not have been that way especially if we bear in mind that a year ago a fugitive Hague indictee, general Ante Gotovina was arrested, which symbolically marked the beginning of a one-year period that has just passed. This event definitely opened up some doors for Croatia when it comes to process of approaching so called European and western-Atlantic integrations, and it offered a chance to the society to face some periods of its adjacent past. Just as we have noted earlier, some crucial changes to improve the situation, simply didn't happen.

When it comes to the ruling elite, they managed to blow it, mostly because of their inability to change the judicial system, especially regarding its up-to-datedness and concordance with European legal standards. There's also the problem of fighting corruption, which is an important issue for Europe but only an abstract term in Croatia or in best case still in its infancy. The government is trying to cover up the failures like these by promoting its glaring image and its pro-European declaratory policy on the whole range of issues (including cooperation with the Hague Tribunal and return of the Serbs), but even a slightly more serious analysis will show that the glare is only skin-deep and above all superficial, without true support of the people or even of their own constituency.

Reactions of so called ordinary, small people to the arrest of Ante Gotovina showed exactly what this other, much more honest picture of Croatian society looked like.

The quickest reactions came from those groups who could never come to terms with the fact that the Homeland war had its other, dark side, and that conduct of some officers and soldiers of the Croatian Army was classified as war crime according to the international law. Such a stand is not new and the whole situation resembles to the case of general Mirko Norac, who had been sentenced for war crimes by the Croatian court with a legally-binding verdict. Even though he is a convict, amongst certain circles Norac is perceived much more a hero and/or a martyr than someone responsible for the suffering of innocent civilians. As the result of this situation, so called 'great' and even 'greater' Croats feel huge contempt for one of the principal institutions of the Croatian state - its legal system. (This contempt is again displayed in a newly opened case of Branimir Glavaš, not long ago one of Croat Democratic Union's leaders, now a party renegade, who was accused of infamous murders of Serbian civilians in the town of Osijek, in 1991. When it comes to the process of "healing the social tissue" and the role of the judicial system in it, it is even more dangerous that almost the entire society feels the contempt because the procedure of Glavaš being stripped of his immunity was handled with total confusion and dilettantism and it was followed by more confusion regarding the place where the trial would be held - if it happened at all. It may happen in either Osijek or Zagreb but for now no one can say how this saga will end.

I suppose that one should not waste too much time commenting the motivation of people like those, but I do think that we should comment *inertia and silence* which were plainly obvious after so many "spontaneous" demonstrations of support to Ante Gotovina. And the inertia and silence are "produced" by the majority of small, ordinary people. Because we

need to be realistic and say that the irreconcilable and noisy demonstrators are only the few enthusiasts and not those who speak in the name of the majority. No, the majority is far more different from them, and their main characteristic is apathy, as mentioned earlier. For the majority, social events just aren't interesting or motivating enough to take part in them in whatever way - as long as they do not have an impact on their jobs and salaries. That's why we often have a situation in which employees of a factory or a plant who are facing a massive redundancy organize some kind of demonstration or some other form of resistance to their unfortunate fate, but all these efforts remain without any kind of wider social support. It's like most of the population of this country think in terms of "it will not and /or cannot happen to me" thus turning away from those frustrated and loud ones (soon to be hungry, too), on their way to yet another bank where they will try to get (another) loan, guaranteed by their allegedly safe jobs, incomes or pensions, in order to provide a better quality of life, whatever that means in Croatia.

The same kind of apathy and indifference is present regarding the issue of the return of Serbs. While the Government are trying to present themselves *urbi et orbi* as cooperative and above all emphatic towards the interests of the Serbs who wish to return to their homes, the ordinary people remain indifferent, even more so than in the case of the cooperation with the Hague Tribunal. One must mention the closest neighbours of the Serb returnees, who while being on their alcoholic weekend sprees often express their readiness to clear their home country from the ones with the "undesirable type of blood" in their veins, more often verbally than by their actions.

However, if we disregard those few, the vast majority is completely and absolutely uninterested in these problems! And the fact that this social drama is often situated outside the large urban centres and even further away from the centres of power prolongs this situation. Very few people want to know what happens in some God-forsaken place, they never even heard of.

Time took its toll too; it's been 11 long years since the end of the war in Croatia. Both the government and the people are aware of the fact that majority of people who had fled Croatia 11 years ago became enrooted ... somewhere else! And that they aren't really, truly motivated to come back for good. Older people return, but they do not represent any threat, especially from the long-term, strategic point of view. Simply, in this situation time is not on their side! And it definitely is on the side of the government. That's why it's easy for the government to act as if they are "absolutely willing" to help all refugees, when they are aware that the return is just not going to happen. Similar perception of the situation can be heard from ordinary people, too. It's all over now - that is something that can be heard in all parts of Croatia, both in those directly affected by the war and those that were thousands of miles away from the destruction. And it has been over for quite some time yet. Going towards an inevitable end. Despite the overall indifference, everyone knows that.

It would take a long time to analyze why the situation in Croatia is so gloomy. Perhaps we should just underline the work and the position of the non governmental organizations in the Republic of Croatia. Unfortunately, even though the NGOs have been present here for fifteen year already, efforts invested in establishing them on the public scene have not proved fruitful as expected. There's a large number of people who are not aware of the existence and the functioning of the NGO scene. Then, there's even more people, in my opinion, who perceive NGOs as something inherently negative, some kind of necessary evil, troublemakers and foreign lackeys. We come to the conclusion that the number of people who are informed about the role of the NGOs and the potentials that they possess is extremely small! Despite the fact that the number of NGOs of various profiles is extremely large. It is obvious that the synergy of so many small actions hasn't been accomplished so NGOs still haven't become the factor capable to make a serious, long-term social impact in the country. It would take a lot of time to analyze why it is the case. We can only hope that things will improve regarding the NGOs in the forthcoming period.

Marko Martinić, Split

## Serbia

"Montenegrians attacked Serbian bus with rocks" was the headline that dominated the tabloids on August 16, 2006. Some other day it may be "Albanians, who attacked Serbian bus with rocks", and after that Croats and Bosniaks will take upon the role of the aggressor. Only the victim will remain the same, unchanged, constant, the one that has been thrown rocks at, at best, sometimes physically injured, or God forbid, killed. And, only because he/she is a Serb. Because he/she belongs to the people to whom the role of the victim seems to be predestined, living on the bleakness of the Balkans, between the East and the West, tight in a clench of the interests of big powers and small, however cunning and hostile neighbours. Victim seems to have accepted its role completely and in time became accustomed to it like some paradoxical lizard, a nature's anomaly that does its best to become noticed instead of blending in with the surroundings in order to survive, it roars and makes noise, floundering about with its heavy, glaring body, often attacking everyone around it, disregarding the strength of its opponents or if the conflict is really inevitable. It is painful to use the term "Serbs" when we know how many wonderful, as well as evil individuals exist behind this abstract term. No, neither all "Serbs" consider themselves victims, nor do they all enjoy uproar and physical violence. Just as one must warn that it wasn't "Montenegrians" who threw rocks at the bus in downtown Podgorica. If such a thing ever happened, it was done by some individuals, people who have their names and surnames, just like the bus certainly wasn't "Serb", nor was the cow, mentioned in a newspaper report that treats the life of the Serbs in Kosovo that has become classic already, nor is it the flower, the tree, the bus or the ashtray since they could hardly carry an ethnic characteristic.

However, if we make a compromise, and reduce the majority of the population of Serbia to the term "Serbs", we will have to say that most of them, just like this new state they live in, are characterized by self-acceptance, implied in the first paragraph of this article: I am endangered and I feel that I will be a victim (again). I am endangered ... by the others. What others? Well, the others, different ones, today it's the Montenegrians, tomorrow it will be Albanians, day after tomorrow Chinese, and after that homosexuals. And if I attack them it's because I defend myself. Even though I somehow know I will suffer and what's left of „us“ will fit under one plum tree, while „they“ will breed, which is something they have been working on diligently for centuries. And if, by any chance, due to some global magician's trick we are no longer endangered by Albanians and Chinese, there will always be someone willing to occupy us, to run over us, to push us out from our ancient homes, and only masks of the enemy will change, until we realize that behind the mask really is the "other" Serb: the closest neighbour, relative, father or mother, husband or wife, newly born baby, until we realize that behind the masks is really ... my other self. With whom I shall eventually get even, for good. The one that has to be destroyed. That will be the final victory. The victory after which everything else will cease to exist.

Total self-destruction, mental and/or physical is a path that great many Serbs are steadily following, while their nationalistic elites are leading the way.

THE QUESTION OF TERRITORY: In the period of 2005-2006, Serbia was left alone, without Montenegro, while Kosovo took further steps towards formal independence. Serbian elites accepted the independence of Montenegro with emotions, difficulty and disbelief, while Vojislav Koštunica, Serbian prime minister even showed sadness and tears in his eyes. The citizens tried to rationalize it, therefore the dominant attitude could be summed up in the following: "Who needs them anyway, they're small and lazy, they've taken over all the managerial positions and they have free medical treatment, that we have to pay for". In Belgrade, even the most liberal media were humming about the "tight majority", which they had tried to dispute previously. However, the "tight majority" was actually 10 percent - the result (of the Montenegro independence referendum) was 55:45, and in some different circumstances it would be considered a convincing victory. Coming to terms with the independence of Kosovo is even harder to achieve. The conception of Kosovo Serbs as the victims of Albanians has become a modern-day myth, and it just cannot be discussed rationally. As it is the case with Kosovo being "the holy Serbian ground" and it "having

belonged to us for ever". The place where "our ancient homes are" and the "cradle of Serbian spirituality". And none of it is true. However, if we agree that intense and deep emotions are just as important argument as the pure facts in such disputes, we may say that none of it is the whole truth. There are some "other" truths, claimed by "others" and they too must be taken into account. Without a solution of this state and national matter, and the one that will guarantee total independence of Kosovo with respect to Belgrade which will create preconditions for full respect of human and civil rights and freedoms of all the citizens of Kosovo, Serbia will not be able to move ahead. And where is it that the Serbia should go to?

**EUROPEAN UNION:** The consensus was reached on the necessity of Serbia's accession to the European Union. Negotiations about the accession have been put on hold at this moment, since none of the key preconditions for their implementation were met, i.e. the full and unconditional cooperation with the UN International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague. If this country wishes to survive and develop and if we as its citizens want to exercise our right to enjoy "free movement of people, goods and ideas" it will be necessary for Serbia to join the European community. On the contrary, we will remain the "black hole" around which the protective wall will be erected. Unfortunately, there is no alternative to joining the EU. If there was any, the author of this article would use its civil right to for example, initiate an idea of Serbia becoming the member of the United States of America. The actual physical distance is no longer a relevant obstacle in the globalised world we all live. Someone else might insist on full national sovereignty, formation of new Balkan federation or blending some parts of Serbia into the neighbouring countries. And each one of these ideas would have the equal right to be a part of the public debate, if the procedure to support it was in accordance to the Constitution and the laws of this country. But, there is no alternative to EU. Even the politicians in Belgrade agree with that. Why don't they arrest Bosnian Serbs' war commander Ratko Mladić, then? Because his arrest is not about joining the EU, it's about dealing with the past, really. And, that's something that is successfully hushed up in Serbian public.

**DEALING WITH THE PAST:** The incident that happened in the south Serbian city of Niš, in July 2006 is an illustrative example of the unwillingness of Serbian society to accept the truth about crimes that had been committed in the name of the society and the state during the 1990-ties. Four NGO activists were physically attacked in the city centre by their fellow citizens because they handed out T-shirts and badges depicting Ratko Mladić followed by the words "Wanted for Genocide", thus commemorating the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crimes in Srebrenica. The International Hague Tribunal indicted Ratko Mladić, as the first in the line of responsibility for the genocide, i.e. killing of 8000 of Bosniaks from Srebrenica and torture and exile of tens of thousand people from Srebrenica, aiming to permanently change the ethnical structure of the population in the region of Eastern Bosnia. Niš based activists were taken to the police station twice for the purpose of "police investigation", where they were held for the total of five hours. They were interrogated because they wrote graffiti with the above mentioned message about the escaped general. More importantly, during the interrogation policemen spent only about half an hour talking to them about the actual misdemeanour - graffiti writing, and the rest of the time was dedicated to some kind of political-patriotic-ideological re-training that included the following statements of the policemen: „I'd defend Mladić, even if it meant going to war“, „Why don't you put Clinton in graffiti?“, „Why are you provoking the people, can't you understand their rage?“, „Who's giving you money“, „Humanitarian law is a dead letter once the killing starts“, „You're a refugee, how can you think like that? Change it“, „We should all fight in the war for Kosovo, both me and my children“, „What are you going to do if Bulgarians attack Niš“, „If you don't feel like a Serb, go to Croatia"... No disciplinary measures were ever taken against the policemen, and the harassment of activists stopped only after Western diplomats issued some serious warnings to both Prime Minister Vojislav Koštunica and the Interior Minister Dragan Jočić.

**THE RULE OF THE LAW:** The rule of the law is not implemented in Serbia. The series of surveys that was conducted by The Youth Initiative for Human Rights showed it quite clearly. The research was dedicated to the implementation of „transitional laws“ - Law on

Protection of Right And Freedoms of Ethnic Minorities, Law on Prosecution of War Crimes, Law on Free Access to Information, Law on Lustration, Law on Assumption of Jurisdiction of Military Court, Military Prosecutor's Offices, and Military Attorney's Office Law on Ombudsman, Public Information Law and Broadcasting Law. The conclusion was drawn that people who are in power still do not obey the laws thus undermining the rule of the law in Serbia. The Law on Lustration has never been implemented, those responsible for violations of human rights remain in their positions and participate in public life, ombudsman was not appointed even though that should have happened as early as the beginning of this year; only about 25% of the institutions respect the Law on Free Access to Information while BIA (former State Security) and the Government of Serbia refuse to obey the decisions of the Supreme Court; ethnic minority rights are either respected or violated, depending on the mere will of the political rulers; war crimes are being processed in such a way to keep those who had issued orders out of the indictment; hate speech and promotion of ethnic, religious and racial intolerance are continuously present in some media ... "Serbia will not become the state of law until those in power start respecting legal system and until those who undermine that system by breaking the law are punished" - that is the message of this report.

THE CONSTITUTION: Serbia will not become the state of law, order and democracy as long as its constitution is not in accordance with international standards. Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia had been destroyed, and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was founded, then the FRY ceased to exist and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro was formed. All that is history now and what we have is a sovereign Republic of Serbia. During all this time we've had a socialist Constitution, which was adopted in 1990. Sixteen years later, several drafts of the new constitution were defined. What they all have in common are two major issues that cause controversy - whether Serbia will be defined as the state of Serb people or the state of its citizens, and whether the official script will be Cyrillic or both Cyrillic and Latin. The definition of the Kosovo status is unclear, since the process of resolving the status is under way, and so is the case with the subject of the autonomy of Vojvodina. If the suggestions of the Prime Minister's Vojislav Koštunica Democratic Party of Serbia are accepted about Serbia as the "state of the Serbian people and all its citizens" and only the Cyrillic script is accepted as official, it will represent the defeat of the civic state and open society and the defeat of the efforts to have the state in which differences will be accepted as an abundance instead of an obstacle, and the fact that someone does not belong to the Serbian people or uses Latin script will be reasons for discrimination. The subject that was not publicly discussed was the way constitution would define the issue of marriage: either as an association of a man and a woman or an association of partners. In case the gender definition remains, any advocacy for the same-sex marriages will be hindered, and it will be very difficult to overcome it only by the Constitutional amendments. And, as long as Serbia does not accept the law on same-sex partnerships, large number of its citizens will remain discriminated in exercising their rights and freedoms. It is unclear who should adopt this new constitution - the present Parliament of Serbia, the constituent assembly, the new Parliament elected after the elections or citizens on the referendum.

Due to its length, this article deals only with some of the most important issues Serbian society and state are facing now and events that happened in the last year. The treatment of the small religious communities, organised crime, violence against women and children, relations with neighbouring countries, development of the civil sector, reforms of the judicial and police system, slow privatization process and implementation of the open market - these are just some of the remaining problems that haven't been solved yet, and will remain unsolved for a long time. Serbia is not the country that is going full steam ahead, towards some goal on which the social consensus was agreed. Serbia is neither the state where institutions consistently respect laws, human and civil rights and freedoms, nor is the country willing to face its past mistakes. Serbian society still isn't ready to give up its national myths, collective misconceptions and small-town mentality, society where differences are accepted and intertwined, which exists for the sake of happiness and well-being of its free citizens. So what is Serbia then, what is Serbian society? It's something far

better than what we had under the rule of Slobodan Milošević, but too far from what we want, strive for and what we should fight for, regardless of anything.

Nikola Tomić, The Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Beograd **Montenegro**

During the last fifteen years we have gotten used to hearing over and again that the period of time in which we live is one of portentous and crucial importance or at least one that it is bringing some new, historic turning point to our lives, not just in Montenegro, but in the Balkans as well. However, last twelve months in Montenegro, truly earned this attribute. So, let's sum it all up:

Montenegro restored its independence on the referendum which was held in the fair and democratic conditions, on May the 25<sup>th</sup>, 2006. The country remains under the same rule that has survived for fifteen years at the head of the country (they confirmed their absolute majority and extended their mandate in the office for four more years at the September elections); state was recognized by all the relevant international factors, although that is not the case with the big part of the opposition and people in Montenegro); it was accepted as a full member of all international organizations except European Union, and managed to prepare the draft of the Constitution of Montenegro based on expert's approach in a relatively short period of time, for which the process of adoption should start in a couple of days (either in the parliament by the 2/3 majority or at the new referendum - which the state cannot afford due to the insufficient budget resources).

As one of the former SFRY's republics, Montenegro was the last one to achieve its independence, thus hopefully putting an end to a long lasting, ferocious disintegration of our former homeland. What really deserves to be mentioned is the fact that apart from the usual dissatisfaction and unwillingness of some to accept the defeat, there were no serious threats to the stability of Montenegro, which was duly feared after some warnings about the "war referendum" had been issued.

Still, no consensus was agreed upon the mutual action and looking after the interests of our new state. Parliamentary and local elections that were held in September were the best indicator of this situation: it was an extension of the pre-referendum campaign with slogans like «no surrender» and «no retreat» openly calling upon non-acceptance of the independence of Montenegro, accompanied by promises that the election victory would be followed by re-unification with Serbia. Such campaign surely could not give results and all we ever got was in fact consequential re-grouping amongst the opposition, while the ruling coalition again secured absolute majority in the parliament for four more years. The strongest opposition party in the parliament is now The Movement for Change (former NGO called Group for Change) whose electoral results are quite high if we keep in mind that the party is quite young, and that it was the first time they participated at the elections, while their campaign was based exclusively on truly necessary economic and social reforms (and criticism addressed to Milo Đukanović). Right behind them is a coalition of Serbian parties: "Serbian List" whose campaign was openly advocating for the protection of the interests of the Serbian people in Montenegro thus taking over some votes of the SNP (the most influential opposition party before the elections). It is important to underline that Albanians in Montenegro now have three, instead of two representatives in the parliament while Bosniak party in coalition with the Liberal party managed to make it to the parliament, thus providing parliamentary representation of Bosniak people.

The constitutional assembly of the Parliament of Montenegro which should accept country's Constitution started with the sounds of the Montenegrin anthem, bringing the picture of the everlasting division of the Montenegrin society visible with the naked eye, - a lovely sight indeed: while the ruling coalition together with the Movement for Change paid their respect to the anthem by standing, the opposition MPs kept sitting in their benches thus demonstrating their attitude towards the anthem and the state to whom the anthem belongs.

Due to the expert draft of the new Constitution of the Republic of Montenegro or to put it more precisely, some of its key points, there was not a moment of rest from the heated up fervour. The most important item in it is certainly the fact that the Montenegro is defined



as the civic state, while all the peoples living in it have equal rights, without any constitutive peoples. Reactions from the pro-Serbian political parties to this were quite intense since they had insisted on the Serbs and Montenegrins having the status of the constitutive peoples. There are also issues of Montenegrin as the official language and "the Montenegrin church" which is equal in its rights to all the other religious communities existing in Montenegro. This is something that is waiting to face its consequences, because it brings along an inevitable re-distribution of the church property which the Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral of the Serbian Orthodox Church finds unacceptable, all of which leads to the conclusion that such Constitutional draft will not pass in the parliament with the necessary two-thirds majority. That of course calls for the new referendum, for which there is no money in the budget, according to the information provided by the finance minister.

At the very end, here is some news of different kind - there is no Army in Montenegro any more. According to the government's decision the Army is cancelled and soldiers were sent home from the army barracks. The police took over all the duties of the army, and it will continue to do so until the army becomes entirely professional and the number of its members significantly reduced. Besides, it was announced that the previous Prime Minister Milo Đukanović would withdraw from politics (it seemed most likely that he would be replaced with the justice minister in the former cabinet Željko Šturanović), which means the end of the fifteen year long political career of a person already pronounced the most responsible for the renovation of the Montenegro independence. Even more importantly, this indicates to the period of a calmer, less personalized and less ardent political confrontations in Montenegro.

Raško Radević, Podgorica

## **My View of the Situation in the Republic of Macedonia in 2006**

(Brief Report)

One of the events that marked 2006 was parliamentary election. Although there were no major problems or outbreaks of physical violence, we cannot conclude that they were fair and democratic. During the pre-election period itself, there were breaches of law, and during the elections on the voting polls in the mainly Albanian-populated communities, there were several breaches of the voting rights which directly influenced the number of mandates of those parties in the Parliament. Unsatisfied with the outcome, the party DUI<sup>4</sup> blocked the roads and international forces "had" to intervene i.e. American Ambassador and the Ambassador of the European Union in Macedonia even had to give instructions on how the future government should look like. Be that as it may, the new government is constituted and, as many people point out, with a great number of MP's who abused the law.

Regarding gender equality, what comes out first is 30% representation of women, there is a great number of women MP's, however only 3 women in the ministerial positions and 3 mayors in the total of 84 municipalities, which is not satisfying at all.

Regarding poverty, the condition is still the same as in the recent years, perhaps even worse. Human rights can hardly be realized in such severe circumstances, especially if we speak of rights of the children. The fact that 18 000 children ages 7 to 18 do not attend schools speaks volumes. During the last four years Global Action Week Campaign is launched each April, advocating for the inclusion of all children in quality education and calling on to all the governments throughout the world to undergo this effort. The same happened in 2006, with the exception of one representative of the political party in power labeling it a pre-electoral marketing of the opposition, in an article in daily newspaper. In

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<sup>4</sup> Democratic Union for Integration.

essence, I view this as one of the features of our society, because for years now - each activity of some civic organization is assigned a political nature, which diverts attention of the general public from major problems that are hard to resolve but determine the future of any country.

Finally, after much discussion the new Law on Police Forces has been passed, as well as the Law on Equal Opportunities for women and men. Some people feel that these two laws, as well as many other laws already passed, do not contain most adequate of solutions in their framework.

Gordana Pirkovska Zmijanac  
First Children's Embassy in the World - Megjashi, Skopje

## PERSONAL VIEWS

### National Identity?!

I'm beginning to feel tired and fed up when this subject is mentioned, but on the other hand I do need to offer my own very personal view regarding it.

At times it seems to me that everything was said about the subject already and that I have already worked out all the stages of my own national identity. But, just when I think that I have finally come to terms with myself, another new, still unknown chapter opens up.

At this moment, what comes across my mind is one song. It goes like this: «It's beautiful to be a Croat / Thank you mother / Praise the lord and love your fellow neighbour / and die there».

When I first heard this song, it filled me up with some sort of pride and joy (I guess it was the 'national' pride) and it seemed to define my own attitude toward my national identity in a best way.

Many years later, when I remembered it, I asked myself why there was no mentioning of Croat women in the song and if those who did not "praise the lord" or decided to live elsewhere were less Croats than those who met the song's criteria. What was the meaning of 'love the fellow neighbour'? And who the neighbour was, anyway? My attitude toward it was an expression of solidarity with those who were like me, with whom I found myself in the same ethnic and religious group, because, my God, regardless of the differences that existed on the surface, those who believed in God in the same way I did and through the tradition that I also shared were mine, those who were born and grew up within the same culture, folklore, with the same symbols and with the same value system as I did.

Now, I find it difficult to remember how long it took me to understand that those "others" in an ethnical sense, based on whose opposites I defined myself and from who I turned my head off because they weren't "mine" were not those who were the menace, but that it was me who threatened them with my behaviour and by not doing anything. It hurts to realize that by doing so I offered legitimacy to all those "Croatian Napoleons" who were born in the war amid overall-Croatian hysteria that wished to wipe off and kill entire peoples from the country that was just as much theirs as it was mine.

Getting to know these ordinary, small people, who suffered so much during and after the war in the name of "holy Croatian struggle against the enemy and the aggressor" which I also supported indirectly, by avoiding Serbs and Bosniaks, and labelling them as the "enemies", I went through the transformation, that had started with the feelings of pride and joy and arrived to the point of negating my Croatness, because being Croatian actually started to hurt. And it was much easier to reject it than to face it ...

It took some time before I was able to figure it out and understand that as long as I deny being a Croat, some other Croats are establishing and setting up values what Croat men and women should be, by developing nationalisms and supporting fascisms, and that is not at all what I wanted.

Today I listen to some other songs and I'm creating a different, new value system with people who support the same sense of justice as I do, who also feel that they need to change things in the societies that we live in, even though they were marked by some entirely different social and ethnic contexts.

I became aware that the relationship between national identity and the person who has it is very personal, and that it's primarily up to me what I will become and how I will affirm it and what I will do with it, too.

I am aware of the climate and the culture that guided me and developed me. I'm aware of my "roots", but these roots are not something that allows me to justify anybody (including myself) who is unjust or commits violence against someone else, just because they have "other roots".

From the position of someone who feels Croatian national identity as their own, I want to accept my share of responsibility for the societies in which I live and to react when I see that something stinks or doesn't work.

I want to confront fascism and nationalism that come out of different ways people affirm their national identity that I consider my own. It hurts me to see that it is considered normal, and taken for granted that the minority should suffer, so Serbs who returned to

Croatia need to put lot more time and effort to repair their houses while being subjected to constant violence that comes from different sources, either from obstacles caused by administration and institutions or because their neighbours aren't happy to live close to the "aggressors" again.

It hurts me that it has become almost impossible to live with a Serb identity in Croatia unless you're willing to admit aggression in advance and poor ashes over your head, to bear your cross and be happy that we - "the good-hearted Croats" let you come back, despite everything. How long will the syntagm about "us, the poor ones who were attacked and unarmed on our own Croatian soil" remain un-examinable as if it is the social consensus?!

It hurts that in my country, there are those who are perceived privileged in every way, due to the identity they were born with and couldn't influence it, while everyone else should be lucky when we Croats "give them something or make something possible" even if it's some basic human right.

On the other hand, I do not want my empathy and solidarity for those with whom I do not share some of my identities, to be perceived as some kind of sacrifice or some special act of humanity, because for me that is the way to support and endorse discrimination according to which those "others" really are less worthy.

I want to develop my own sense of justice that will be a basis to act, without asking myself for people's national, sexual, gender or any other identity.

I want to change and react honestly and decently when someone is oppressed or discriminated and suffer from violence. In what way? There are so many ways, and it's up to me to find my own way.

Sanja Deanković, CNA

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