

CENTAR ZA NENASILNU AKCIJU
CENTRE FOR NONVIOLENT ACTION



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THREE-MONTH REPORT

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

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

CNA started to work in 1997 with an office in Sarajevo. Office in Belgrade started in 2001. CNA is an external branch of KURVE Wustrow.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dear friends,

The markings of this trimester are not just our activities, but the political situation as well.

What was it that we were doing?

In the beginning of March, we organized a long-awaited regional networking meeting of peace activist; in April there was another one of our basic ten-day trainings, in Ulcinj, Montenegro; in May, a part of CNA team visited our friends in Germany, in Berghof Centre and in our “sister”, officially mother organization Kurve Wustrow. In this period, part of CNA team was engaged in the phases VII and VIII of the Training for Trainers program, details of which would be available in a three-month report of our Sarajevo office. Also, the documentary about ex combatants we have been working on is slowly getting along.

As for the political scene, it is much more difficult to comment it, not because there is nothing going on but because it's bursting with violence, with very few good things happening there. This spring was marked: by the escalation of violence in Kosovo, and in Serbia as well (which we had already covered in our previous report); with the assassination of a journalist of a Montenegrin daily “Dan”; with the results of labour of Serbian government and fascist outbursts of its ministers and advisors; with reforms of the reforms; with desecration of gravestones and destruction of religious monuments of “the others”, with the trail to those indicted for the assassination of former Serbian Prime Minister, dr Zoran Đinđić and the politicization of the trail.

One of the very few highlights of this period is a reaction of citizens, nongovernmental organisations and some political parties to passing of the Hague Defendants and Families Support Law. Their initiative for gathering support and their mobility resulted that only two weeks after the Parliament had accepted the Law, the Constitutional Court questioned its constitutional legitimacy, and finally unanimously decided to at least temporary suspend the act.

One of the important developments in this trimester is pre-election campaign for presidential elections. By the time this report is released, the first round of the elections will be over, and a runoff will be set up. There is no doubt which candidate deserves our support.

Death to fascism!

2. MAIN ACTIVITIES

2.1 Report from the Regional Meeting of Activists in the Field of Peace Building

Banja Vrujci, Serbia, March 5–10, 2004

*«Well, if cooperation is so great and important, how come there's so little of it?»
(Quotation of a participant)*

After almost five years of planning, designing, fundraising, repeated attempts to somehow «squeeze» it into a this year's agenda, CNA Belgrade organised a networking meeting for peace activists from the region of former Yugoslavia who are engaged in peace education or who are interested in that area of work.

We worked in the «Banja Vrujci» Hotel, about 90 km away from Belgrade.

The decision to have a four-day meeting was actually a result of a compromise between the wish (and the original idea) CNA team had had to work for the entire five days and available time and capacities of participants who found it hard to devote time for such activities due to their various other commitments.

Meeting was attended by 15 activists from different organisations from: Skopje (Macedonia), Podgorica (Montenegro), Belgrade, Novi Sad, Sombor (Serbia), Zagreb, Karlovac, Grožnjan (Croatia) and Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Meeting was originally aimed to gather a heterogeneous group of people from the region of former Yugoslavia, who were engaged in peace education, using different approaches and methods. Unfortunately, due to multiple cancellations of those who had been invited, it was impossible to gather a mixed group of people with extreme differences with respect to the approach and value orientation towards peace education. Therefore, the concept was changed in the course of the meeting, and the majority of the group were the people who had in various ways cooperated with CNA already. As a result, there was a lack of diversity of values and approaches, thus missing a chance to criticize each other and give and receive opinions from outside to what is currently being done in this field.

During the four days of work, we discussed what was it that peace building included and what were the priorities in our societies, with respect to that; about values that were important to us and the approaches we represented. We asked ourselves (once again) why we were doing this, presented our work and had many discussions about cooperation between organisations and between individuals and organisations ...

What did (not) we gain with this meeting?

Some open space was established for an intense exchange and strengthening of support amongst participants, while there wasn't an explicit mutual criticism, honest feedback and more variety in different approaches to work in this field.

A clearer picture emerged about similarities and differences between priorities in peace building in our societies. The discussion and different views on the question whether to work regionally or locally were especially important. That was the most controversial matter that inspired the most various views and attitudes to come out. The necessity of

regional cooperation was associated to the work on particular areas of peace building (like dealing with the past), but it was also emphasized that there were areas that, at least at this moment, required work in local communities.

We also received a handful of important insights and reflections, as well as several open questions and (eternal) dilemmas:

- Who to invite to these meetings and how to balance “experience” and “inexperience” within the group of participants?
- Is there an interest, at all, for this kind of discussion, especially at the moment when many organisations are struggling to survive and how much they want to support the value system of work?
- Who is going to organize the next meeting like this one, where we could, at least, give all-out support and empowerment to each other?

The documentation from this meeting was made afterwards and it would be available on our web site www.nenasilje.org.

2.2 Basic Training in Nonviolent Conflict Transformation

April 16-26, 2004, Ulcinj, Montenegro

CNA Belgrade office organized the second basic training in 2004.

Eighteen people from Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in the training. This time, exceptionally, there was no one from Montenegro, due to the lack of applications. The training team included: Blerim Jashari from Centar za Balkansku saradnju - LOJA (Centre for Balkan Cooperation - LOJA), Tetovo, Macedonia and Ivana, Milan and Nenad, all three from CNA Belgrade office.

Training documentation entitled “To Hell With Everything” (92 p.) is also available on CNA’s web site. The training was financially supported by the German Ministry for Development and International Cooperation (BMZ).

With respect to the concept of the training, the training team is very satisfied with the following:

- The impression that the group's needs were overall well met, due to the implementation of the flexible training concept and the adjustments of the work plan in accordance with those needs;
- The impression of a high level of sensitization to violence in society and recognition of the need to act against it;
- Noticeable and numerous examples of the awakening of need for concrete action, with the strong impulse to act in one's social environment;
- Group’s obvious motivation to work intensively, which was also evident outside the official, workshop part of the training;
- The impression of a deep work being done on the themes of dealing with differences and discrimination, especially those against minority groups as well as about personal responsibility for discrimination.

It is surprising that participants of the training have already joined together, organized themselves and collaborated together in some cases, which is not usual for the basic training. Time will tell how sustainable is the energy and motivation that this training has aroused.

The following points indicate to the need to reconsider possible weak points of this concept:

- Understanding of conflict as a chance and a signal for change was brought in rather late on the level of contemplation within the group, therefore the question remains how deep it was covered;
- There was not enough discussion about understanding, expressing and respecting of needs, earlier in the course of the training, which would contribute to a more thorough work on understanding of conflict;
- Time dedicated to the individual feedback during workshop, wasn't used in a way the training team had expected, but on the other hand there was an opinion that it was the round of feedback that opened up some space and provided a frame inside which numerous individual discussions about various, awoken, painful issues took place.

The important point in trust building and establishment of a safer space for dealing with some more difficult issues was certainly the work on prejudices.

It is also worth mentioning the work done on the theme of nonviolent communication, which did not take too much time during the actual workshop, but was very much present as a sub context of some other workshops. The training team feels satisfied with the exceeded expectations with respect to the way people were communicating within the group. Different way of treating and visualising the subject in the workshop on nonviolent communication certainly gave a big contribution to understanding of the importance of mutual communication as well as to a great amount of energy group invested in communication aiming to achieve better mutual understanding.

The training team is highly satisfied with the work of the group and the enormous motivation they showed. Satisfaction is based on the following points noticed during work:

- They grew and worked together.
- They took very well care of each other and no one was excluded from the group.
- Everyone participated actively in the work which includes both self reflection and strong mutual interaction, although the team did not explicitly call upon that.
- The fact that there was a great age difference amongst participants (aged 20-50) did not present any barrier.
- Safe space for discussion about painful issues was established and there was constant persistence on communication.
- There was mutual encouragement amongst participants.
- Although the group wasn't ethnically balanced, with more people of Serb ethnic identity, it didn't prove to be a difficulty. Even though, the team's impression was that at least one person from Montenegro was missing, as well as one Albanian from Macedonia, or at least one more person from Croatia and Kosovo.

The training team gained the group's trust very fast and it wasn't questioned in the course of the entire training, which was somewhat surprising.

The training team perceives that the group has an unusually high potential for participation in the Training for trainers program, whilst some people expressed their wishes with respect to that on their own initiative.

The work of the training team was intertwined with many difficulties that were mostly brought into the training by the members of the training team in the form of burden, fatigue and tensions we came along with, and less as a result of our work together and with the group. Those difficulties were dealt with alongside and separately from the work with the group, which required a great effort and draw a lot of energy. The team constellation was new, although the four of us had known each other for quite a long time and worked together separately. The gender imbalance with just one woman in the team was not perceived as a big difficulty, although it was an exception from a principle we incline to, otherwise.

We are satisfied with what we accomplished and we wish to work together again in the future.

3. OTHER ACTIVITIES

3.1 Visit to Kurve Wustrow and Berghof Centre

Wustrow - Berlin (Germany), May 2004

In the beginning of 2004, Ivana, Milan, Nenad and Tamara visited Kurve Wustrow and Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management in Berlin, Germany. The meeting that took place in Wustrow was very valuable for both the organizations involved, CNA and Kurve Wustrow - Bildungs - und Begegnungsstätte für gewaltfreie Aktion, CNA's official mother organisation. It was organized with the aim to improve information exchange and communication channels, to get to know each other on both personal and organisational level and to enable discussions and agreements about ways and forms of future cooperation. We were glad to finally get the chance to meet the people with whom we had only been communicating through email until then. Except for the presentation of our work, there was a special presentation of our program «Four Views» about our work in the area of dealing with the past with former combatants, for all those interested.

We were very pleased to use this opportunity to visit our friends in Berghof Center (Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management). On this occasion, we also made a presentation of our programme for the Bergof staff and several guests. We thank them for all the inspiring and interesting questions they had for us.

4. EVALUATION

You can find on our web site

<http://www.nenasilje.org/publikacije/pdf/JointReportEvaluation2004.pdf>

the evaluation of two CNA programmes, done in 2003:

- Programme *Training for trainers*
 - New concept of the programme which consists of eight phases and lasts one year. Evaluation is done by Natascha Zupan, advisor for peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro.
- Programme *Dealing with the Past* (4 views)
 - Peace building programme in cooperation with ex-combatants who participated in wars in former Yugoslavia. Evaluation done by Dr. Oliver Wils, *Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management*.

CNA will very much welcome feedback, suggestions,
questions and criticism concerning this report and our general work.
Your thinking along helps us.
Thank you.

*Many thanks to all those who are supporting
The project of KURVE Wustrow - Centar za nenasilnu akciju,
financially or through their engagement that made this project possible
and helped to secure its implementation
and all of those who are with us in their thoughts.*

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