

CENTAR ZA NENASILNU AKCIJU  
CENTRE FOR NONVIOLENT ACTION



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# SIX-MONTH REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2003 - FEBRUARY 2004.

*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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Dear friends,

As we were preparing this report, an awful escalation of violence was taking place in Kosovo, followed by that in Nis, Belgrade, Novi Sad.... We are horrified by these events, although we find them to be less than surprising - the conflicts are smouldering constantly and the current speech of hatred keeps feeding them. It was just a matter of time and place before the violence exploded yet again.

We are aware of the importance of the work on establishing trust between people and on decomposing traditionally inherited prejudices and hatred. However, when the violence has reached this level, we have a feeling of our hands being tied behind our backs: we cannot end it immediately and are trapped in an observers' position, which is painful. Although we raise our voice against violence and speech of hatred, there are times when we feel just like mere observers, because there's nothing more we can do. What instils us with hope, the will and motivation to continue are networks of people with whom we have worked and co-operated and the mutual trust we have built together. People that support each other more than they have ever done before, people who support the people from Kosovo by merely being in touch with them.

We enclose the appeal initiated by Women in Black (Žene u Crnom) from Belgrade. This appeal is not only supported by ourselves, but also by many other organisations.

Please also find the attachment with an article published in daily newspaper Danas (24.03.2004.) - the one containing our reaction to this situation.

### Stop violence, stop crime!

#### Public announcement

Unfortunately, a spiral of violence and crimes in our country continues. After a horrible wave of killings of civilians and setting fires to churches in Kosovo, motivated by the desire to ethnically cleanse this province of non-Albanian population, the violence extended to Belgrade, Novi Sad and Nis. Violent responses to Albanian crimes in Kosovo additionally humiliated citizens of Serbia. The government demonstrated an equal level of being powerless to prevent these savage acts as have the international armed forces.

Responsibility for violence can not just be attributed to hooligans and extreme supporters, but also to a dominant spirit of revenge, speech of hatred that is yet again present in the local media. The democratic public showed lack of readiness to take note of the roots of acts that have happened yesterday and today in crimes committed during the nineties. Advocates of hate still vote for violence, thus managing to prevent dealing with the past which in turn continues to destroy the future of everybody in this region.

We expect the civil society in Kosovo to condemn Albanian crimes against Serbian and other non-Albanian civilians in Kosovo clearly and finally. We invite the civil society in Serbia to join us in this request to stop the spiral of violence and to transform the intolerant spirit of revenge into the spirit of respect for human rights.

A protest against this latest wave of violence and crime will take place on Saturday, March 20, from 1 to 2 o'clock on Trg Republike in Belgrade.

*Women in black - Belgrade*  
*Belgrade, 18.3.2004.*

# 1. MAIN ACTIVITIES

## 1.1. Regional meeting with the subject of "Dealing With The Past"

*Banja Vrujci, December 16-22, 2003*

A regional networking meeting of individuals working or intending to work in the field of facing the past in the regions of former Yugoslavia took place in Banja Vrujci, near Ljig, Serbia, from December 16 through 22 2003.

The meeting was organised by the CNA office in Belgrade, with financial support from the Development Ministry of Federal Republic of Germany (BMZ).

The idea for this meeting came through CNA's work in this field and stemmed from the need to analyse in more detail the possible approaches to this subject in the context of peacebuilding, and also to exchange feed-back on the projects/programs done so far, as well as the potential new ideas. One of the more important objectives of this meeting was by all means to reconsider the important missing pieces in the approaches used so far in the work on opening the process of facing the past and its continuation in our states, as well as to understand different visions, strategies and needs of the work in this field, both regionally and at particular local levels.

One of the objectives is to work on a kind of networking through exchanging experiences of people who see themselves in the work on this process so far and in the future.

At this meeting, through conversation and mutual reflection, we wished to try and locate the segments of the process of facing the past in which we ourselves (active citizens in our respective communities) see ourselves as the carriers (or one of the carriers) of concrete activities covering those segments, to exchange the experiences we have attained so far, as well as difficulties and success stories - most of which we have indeed managed to do.

At this point, we decided to focus primarily on the relation of Serbia-BH-Croatia, the region which we find suitable for this kind of processes, primarily because of the sufficiently long period of time that has passed since the war.

A total of 23 persons were present at the meeting, persons from Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia and Hercegovina. The number of participants varied during the meeting, since a few of them arrived later, whilst others had to leave before the end of the meeting, due to different obligations they needed to attend to, but there were never fewer than 20 participants in the group.

Participants active in the following organisations were present at the meeting: Zene u crnom (Women in Black), Belgrade; Peace Studies Centre, Zagreb; Youth Centre Postpessimists of Montenegro, Podgorica; Documentation Centre "Wars 1991-1999" Belgrade; International Committee for Missing Persons (ICMP), Sarajevo; Altruist Centre, Split; Citizens' Initiative Board, Nis; Trauma Centre, Novi Sad; Centre for Education through Drama of BH, Mostar; Eko Centre, Latinovac; Peace and Human Rights Centre, Osijek; Quaker Peace and Social Witness Sarajevo, Living Without Firearms, Belgrade, Tolerance Society, Backa Palanka; and Centre for Non-violent Action, Belgrade/Sarajevo. Not a single person from Republic Srpska, nor from the part of BH with Croatian majority,

was present at the meeting, which we perceive to be a significant difficulty - and open question remains with regard to the ways in which to approach co-operation on facing the past with individuals and organisations from these regions, because we have the impression that the number of such initiatives is minimal. While conceiving the concept for this meeting, we had the idea for it to be a discussion on the subject, with issues we by all means wanted to raise, along with focused monitoring of the participants' needs and including all issues and dilemmas coming up in the process.

We started the meeting by analysing the very term 'facing the past', along with allowing the time for a conversation on personal motivation of each and every one of us for the work on the process of facing the past in the region we live and work in. We consider the issue of the lack of clear personal standpoint and transparent expressing of personal motivations through public work in this field, which greatly contributes to some problems we face arising, to be a very important one. A frequent (and, in some cases, perhaps even justified) perception in 'the public' is that what we do is 'commissioned by foreigners, and with the purpose of personal gain', which in itself speaks clearly of the need for speaking publicly about our views and motivations, as well as of the process of creation of the programs themselves and the reasons for analysing their success ( which is also perceived as writing a report for foreigners, instead of the process of improving the approach and methodology). On the other hand, through addressing the issues of motivation at this kind of a meeting, and thereby getting to know each other better, more room is allowed for mutual understanding of different views on the process of facing the past, but also for more options for mutual understanding of different views on the process of facing the past. This also creates more options for supplying the needed and required support, as well as for recognising the areas in which it can be supplied even if not specifically asked for.

A great section of the meeting was dedicated to the analysis of what is being done in respect of facing the past in our respective states, and to talks of success of these processes and their clear contribution to the process of facing the past. Some of the statements that could be heard in the process might provide a good insight into the framework of the discussion:

– *There's a lot of talk in the public about the increased victimisation of my group, the points are gained by insisting on my sacrifices. There is no talk of my responsibility as an individual. What is the purpose and the motivation behind it, which values do we want to promote through that. There are boards for truth and reconciliation, but there is no good sense either for the victims, or the politically manipulated people. It is not alright to label them without allowing them some room, it's problematic, contents wise, and serves to collect political points and to homogenise my nation. We are there to defend ourselves, but only rarely do people deal with responsibility of their group.*

– *I have a rigid understanding of the term facing the past, to me it's not only talking about the war, but also facing the opposite story that's not mine. Not everything that mentions the war is facing the past. The problem in Serbia is the fact that there is no other side to the story, rather than the lack of talk about the war.*

– *My key feeling about the NGOs is the lack of strategy in the sense of further thinking about the needs in the field and the context of wider local and social communities. I don't see the approach to eastern Bosnia, but it's all random, there's no deeper consideration of one's own needs and how to approach them. It also has to do with the lack of motivation. On one hand, it takes de-traumatisation and punishing the crimes, and on the other hand it's addressing what we're facing. In our work, we have encountered reactions ranging from fear and denial to 'that's what should be done, that's great'. The question for me is what I want and what I have the capacity to deal with, whether it's dealing with crimes or affirmation of values.*

Further in the meeting, we tried to reconsider the terms and constructs that we often use dealing with this subject, treating their meaning and their influence in the wider social community as something that goes without saying. Some of the notions we discussed were: reconciliation, facing, collective responsibility and also the notion of truth and its relativity in regional views on the problem of not facing the past. One of the important subjects we worked on, and that a whole day was structured for dealing with, was 'Relation of the elements in our society recognised as a part of dealing with the past with the process of building the lasting peace in the region (and more broadly as well)'. We consider setting the work on this process on an analytical plane of building/not building, even decomposing, peace and analysis of the factors influencing it to be one of the key points for quality view on how all-encompassing the process is, and thence also allowing room for constructive criticism and re-evaluation of how useful they are. Perceiving dealing with past as a part of peacebuilding and the non-existence of the possibility to view the two as non-correlative elements further opens possibilities for clearly recognising what doesn't really belong in the process of dealing with the past.

Some of the elements we have been dealing with are: board for truth and reconciliation, return of assets, the Hague tribunal, commerce/economy as a first step towards reconciliation and living together, collective responsibility, impact of religious institutions on the process of dealing with the past, donors' great interest in the subject of facing the past, affirmation of the national identity, monument to the perished warriors in Republic Srpska...

Further on in the meeting, we talked about the processes we wish to initiate or are initiating in the work on dealing with the past, about the problems and difficulties we encounter in our work in this field as well as about allies and opponents we recognise in our work. A segment of the meeting was assigned to the talk about the advantages of regional approach to the work in this field (focusing on the former Yugoslavia region). One of the objectives of this 'networking meeting' is certainly promoting and affirming regional approach in the work on peacebuilding based on co-operation, networking, support (both through criticism and empowering) and knowledge multiplication. The talk about networking, about what we want from it concretely, followed towards the ending, leaving a strong feeling of the need for mutual support and exchanging information and knowledge in the region. We are extremely glad that the focus was relocated from the usual networking through technical agreements, signing contracts and agreements on co-operation, creating mailing lists that usually never really come to life, towards reviewing the needs we have, the needs for support and the ways in which we can receive it or supply it.

To quote one of the participants of the meeting:

– *At this point I'm confused and delighted. This was the first time anyone's asked me what I needed in the context of networking at the end of the meeting, after four days of talks. So far, it has always been at the beginning of the meetings, the sole purpose of which was to sign protocols on co-operation after which we may agree on what it is we are going to do. To submit a joint project proposal and so on... and it'd never worked. Whereas here, I see the completely reversed situation and that's why I'm thrilled. And I think this is the right way.*

What we find important is that the issue of mutually supplying legitimacy and support came up, in the sense of joint reaction to the processes we recognise as problems in our societies and which we wish to act upon, as well as distribution and exchange of

knowledge and information we have, and which can help us in the work on the same or similar problems in the region. There has also been a lot of talk on the consequences of violence in these regions, but what lacked was the structured talk on the causes themselves.

The interaction within the group was very lively, and there was enough room for people to hear each other and exchange. Also, a high level of transparency was achieved very early on, even from people who had not been accustomed to this work method. There was also room for mutual criticism and reflecting. The group dynamics was such that those people who didn't say much during the discussions were very active during the spare time that was mostly used to further deepen the subjects discussed that day as well as to talk about the possibilities of co-operation between the participants themselves.

The methodology we used to process the subjects of the meeting was mostly based on plenum discussions and talks in smaller groups. The question remains of how to methodologically improve the meetings of this kind in our further work, primarily in the sense of better dynamics and diversity of the workshops.

Our general impression is one of a job well done, and that we have managed to cover most of the objectives of the meeting. We have tried to elaborate and initiate the thought process on many aspects of the work on facing the past and its relation to building the lasting peace in the Balkans. We are quite pleased with having had the chance to express and hear different opinions and needs related to this field, primarily in the sense of looking back on the non-violence context, personal responsibility and activism and their links to the near and not so near past.

In the evaluation round at the end of the meeting, the participants answered the question: What was it you gained, what was it you liked and what did you consider a difficulty at this meeting?

Some of the participants responded thus:

- *Whether this was a seminar, a training, a meeting, I've learned an awful lot. Work wise, it means a lot to network. I gained a lot more than this, I began changing, I've learned about environments I had known nothing about. I really felt a pleasant atmosphere, a warm environment, I've grown really close to some people, which I hadn't expected. The distance was diminished to the extent that no fear whatsoever remained. We are trying to make others feel safe in our presence.*

- *I am glad I've seen other people and went into this openly, and we have worked so much on the things that indicate the very core of the subject. I find it very important that the whole region is present, that all of us are working on this subject together, because we were all involved in what had transpired. I've heard opinions that allowed me insights into other angles of looking at this subject, it's good that we dissected, deconstructed and then put it all back together again. I have so much work to do when I get home. Right now I feel empowered, and I know that the real life will put an end to this 'high'. The informal time was lovely.*

- *It meant a lot to me to leave Belgrade and to have some room to think and to clarify or muddle up some things I'm working on. What also meant a lot was the feeling that my problems are not mine alone. Never before have I felt safe enough to broach some subjects that we have broached here. I felt these people here were my allies and partners in the process and the feeling was good. I think that what it takes is a network based on support and co-operation. Thank you, everyone.*

- *I don't have much opportunity to take part in the workshops, because I'm usually the one leading and facilitating them. This was relaxing and helped me learn a lot more. I find the new acquaintances, new friendships, new partners the most valuable. I enjoyed*

*the process, the informal way of addressing the subjects. The plastic facilitation annoyed me, hold on, can't do that, no time. My recommendation is for everything to be a bit more casual and relaxed, with an invisible facilitator and no limitations. Otherwise, everything is above my expectations. I hope I have contributed to the work. As I was coming here, I wanted to make the victims' side conscious, and I acquired future friendships.*

Documentation from the meeting, containing the description of work blocks through days, as well as the meetings protocols, is available at our offices, and will also soon be available on our website [www.nenasilje.org](http://www.nenasilje.org)

## **1.2. Basic training in non-violent conflict transformation**

*Tivat, February 19 through March 1 2004*

Our seventeenth training in non-violent conflict transformation was held from February 19 through March 1 2004 in Palma hotel in Tivat. The training was organised by CNA Belgrade office, and prepared and lead by Ivana Franovic of CNA Belgrade, Nedžad Horozovic and Sanja Deankovic of CNA Sarajevo and Predrag Azdejkovic of Social Democratic youths who was a participant in our last year's Training for Trainers.

More than 174 persons applied for taking part in the training, which is one of the signals that the need for this type of peace education really exists in the region of former Yugoslavia, while at the same time the ever decreasing donors' readiness to financially support this type of activities is worrisome.

While sending out the invitations to apply, we did our best for them to reach as many people outside the NGO 'circles' as possible, so that this time we received more applications from people in education, members of political parties and people in the media than has usually been the case.

We are glad about this, because we see these groups as people who have great potential for involvement in the peacebuilding process in the region. We were also glad about the greater number of people applying from BH, Croatia and Kosovo, as well as the motivation they've had to participate, whilst the situation with Macedonia was worryingly inverse.

The large number of application made it possible for us to, bearing in mind the expressed motivation, form a rather heterogeneous group. The differences in the group (age, professional orientation, different experiences related to the war...) and their impact on the work in the training is something that is a specificity of this training. Age difference and a division that formed within the group based on that criterion was particularly pronounced, which at times made the joint work more difficult, but was also a challenge and very inspiring for the work on dealing with differences.

As a difficulty in the work of the group, it was notable that the need for expressing sympathy for the suffering and the need to criticise the justification of violence and manipulation from the role of a victim were experienced as mutually exclusive.

The trainers' team has, in their views on the training, expressed content with the room that was created in the group from the very start, the room for expressing a different



point of view. Relating to that, the opening and work on the conflict in the group and the group's readiness to take responsibility for joint work and mutual relations, and to, as much as they were individually able to, deal with difficulties and conflicts. That was inspiring for the group, with regard to re-examining their own behaviour.

The impression after the training was that the national identity, relation towards one's own national identity and the relation to national identity/ies of others is something that raised the most questions and different standpoints. Also, making the prejudices linked to these national identities conscious, as well as dealing with them, was a strong mark of this training.

The workshops often lasted quite a bit longer than was planned, primarily due to the participants' need to complete particular discussions, and the talks frequently continued in the spare time. The group of participants was highly motivated for work, so that the trainers' team found the work with this group to be a real pleasure. The unusual thing was that we haven't noticed the 'NGO tourism' syndrome, which is quite frequent and which we are constantly looking to diminish - quite the contrary, most of the participants were highly interested in the subjects of the workshops and related to them personally.

The contents of the workshops very often related to the experience of living in BH and some occurrences in the Bosnianandhercegovinian society (nationality based discrimination, division of the schools, (not) facing the past, articulating the need for confessing one's own suffering in the way that justifies violence...), but recognising and speaking of the similar occurrences/problems in other-own environments with all their specificities happened less frequently. There was less exchange on the situations in other societies, so the room for mutual support and inspiration stemming from exchange of concrete ways of acting towards those problems was also diminished.

The frequency of responses on the recent events in Kosovo to the joint mailing list formed after the training on the initiative of the participants and the contents of these responses, particularly calls for exchange on the possible actions against violence, speak of the increased level of sensibilisation to one's own responsibility in society and of the participants empowerment to act.

Since there were participants from political parties from different states at the training, there were also initiatives about their mutual concrete co-operation, which have so far remained only ideas.

The question in the evaluation survey: What do you think you have gained by this training and how can you use it? Some of the participants replied:

*– An obvious experience of getting to know the differences. Useful information on the work in a team that I will certainly pass on to my members. I will implement talking about the conflicts and their solving in my work in the 'Pancevac' newspaper, and also in the future projects I plan for young people in Vojvodina, and of course in my everyday communication.*

*– I have received some new knowledge, expanded my views about the subjects, I have experienced a same problem in different ways, I was personally empowered, met some lovely people... Super, but we always need to try and give more to each other (I appear surreal, sometimes, only sometimes...)*

*– I have exchanged experiences with others in the group and realised there were many prejudices amongst us.*

– *I found directions for transformation of the conflict and its understanding. As far as the concrete knowledge is concerned, I'll become aware of it the first time these directions help me. I suppose it will be of use particularly in my work with displaced persons; quite soon.*

– *I'm sure I'll be able to use this knowledge. My work is in direct contact with people, if I manage to convey at least a bit of what I've learned here. My objective is work on raising the degree of empathy among people who have experienced similar difficulties on different sides.*

Documentation from the training including the description of the workshops will be available at [www.nenasilje.org](http://www.nenasilje.org)

## 2. PUBLIC FORUMS "FOUR VIEWS"

### FINAL REPORT

by CNA

PUBLIC FORUMS: DEALING WITH THE PAST

*March-December 2003, BiH, SCG*

Following report presents an internal evaluation of achieved results, difficulties, learning points and recommendations, based on a series of 2 public forums in Bosnia-Herzegovina (organised by Sarajevo office); 3 in Serbia and 2 in Montenegro (organised by Belgrade office), held during 2003. The activity encloses also a two part training for ex-combatants.

#### ***Partners and supporters***

Association of combatants of wars since 1990 (UBR 90)- Vlasotince  
Association for nonviolent action (DNA) - Novi Sad  
Youth organisation Kvar - Kraljevo  
Postpessimists - Montenegro

Association of combatants of wars since 1990 - Serbia  
Association of combatants of wars since 1990 - Montenegro  
DANAS - daily newspaper, Belgrade  
German Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs

### DIFFICULTIES AND LEARNING POINTS

By Sections

#### ***MEDIA***

##### ***Forums in Serbia-Montenegro (SCG)***

Media coverage around forums in Vlasotince, Novi Sad, Bijelo Polje and Podgorica was exceptionally good. An exception presents Kraljevo where only one TV show at local TV station was organised, at price which seems too high in comparison to other services paid for.

Around 25 different media reported about and around forums in Novi Sad. More than 15 in Vlasotince and 21 in Montenegro.

Highlights of all 7 forums present following media appearances:

Shows with forum speakers as studio guests: Primetime TV show at state FTV in Sarajevo; 3hour primetime TV show at TV Montena in Podgorica, broadcasted 2 times; TV Jesenjin (Novi Sad), 2 broadcasts; TV shows at TV 4S and TV Rosulja in Vlasotince, both broadcasted several times at viewers requests

TV Documentaries made by: TV Elmag (Podgorica), TV Panonia and TV Novi Sad (Novi Sad), TV K9 (Kragujevac)

Series of articles in various regional and national newspapers (Dnevnik, Danas etc)

Series of radio shows in all towns except Kraljevo

Newspaper supplement publication on forums in dailies Oslobođenje (Sarajevo), Nezavisne novine (Banja Luka), Danas (Beograd/Novi Sad), Pobjeda (Podgorica) and Dan (Podgorica).

How this high media coverage has been achieved?

As learned in previous experiences, huge effort has been made by local partners to secure media coverage, this included many personal visits and negotiations with media representatives. Local partners in Montenegro developed successful strategy in which they asked editors to name a journalist to be in charge of coverage. Furthermore they also held workshops for journalists prior to forums and after the forums with an aim to raise awareness for the importance of the issue of dealing with the past.

It is notable that apart from one exception all articles and broadcasts presented the work in a very affirmative light.

Additionally forums registered high number of audience (apart from Kraljevo, only 40 people), sometimes being overcrowded with dozens of people standing all along (in Novi Sad). Average visit was around 100 visitors which was at most cases near full capacity.

### *Forums in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH)*

Now that we organised first forums in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we are particularly satisfied with the media's huge interest in this kind of activity. Each forum got very well media coverage, by both the local and national media that have bigger circulation and higher ratings, and respectfully stronger influence on public opinion.

After every forum, there was a TV show (on Federal TV from Sarajevo and on Alternate TV from Banja Luka) with the participants of the forums and with the same subject, which is in our opinion an especially big success. Both TV shows were broadcast at prime time and were very well received in public (especially in case of «Dilemmas» on Federal TV).

We were also very satisfied with our cooperation with the «Independent Newspaper» from Banja Luka, that gave us very wide support.

We were a bit surprised with how much potential space exists in the media in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the story about peace and for promotion of various approaches and activities in peace building. There's a lot of interest from media especially with respect to the work with ex-soldiers and it gives us a good indication where to search for allies, before the forthcoming series of public forums in Bosnia and Herzegovina, we plan to do at the end of 2004.

### *Media related difficulties:*

- Demanding a fee for attending a press-conference in Zenica, which seems to be highly disputable and very unprofessional
- Too much imprecision when stating facts from participants' biographies, especially related to their profession and names of the associations they come from (for example,

after the forum in Zenica, «Dnevni avaz» daily newspaper misquoted most of the participants' personal data).

- The approach of the people in charge in «Oslobođenje» daily who were interested exclusively in the financial aspect of our agreement, while at the same time they didn't show such nimbleness with respect to fulfilling their part of the deal.
- Specific difficulty may be noticed only in regard to publication of supplement in SCG where we had experiences of unreasonably high financial demands by several newspapers. However this was resolved by cooperation with daily Danas where we found fully open doors and completely supportive attitude towards the idea.
- At various occasions media treated the topic in a sensational manner, but however not in a negative light.

### *Learning points:*

- Seriously reconsider option of having some media (primarily electronic media) in the role of a local partner for some future public forums.
- Lack of sensitisation for the matters of building sustainable peace. More work needs to be done on peace education of journalists/reporters, especially in the context of dealing with the past. It's our opinion that at this moment there's a paradox in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there's a lot of interest, but at the same time not enough sensitisation in the approach to this subject. That is why, along with education, it is necessary to empower awareness that, when it comes to peace work, media can and should be those who initiate and create, instead of just observing and recording the existing activities.
- Organise public presentation of the project and the activities planned for 2004, and invite representatives of certain media, aiming to establish permanent cooperation with the media before, during and after the actual forums.

## **LOKAL PARTNERS**

### *In SCG*

Steps undertaken to secure high motivation of local partners included:

- Preparatory meetings with space to discuss goals, expectations and specific responsibilities.
- Close contact with partners during implementation period
- Most local partners were recruited from the trainers network of CNA

Hence, difficulties which were registered during 2002 and partly during the pilot phase in BiH in 2003 were exceptions. During the past 5 forums in SCG, only in Kraljevo there was dissatisfaction with local partner engagement.

Project support in Serbia and Montenegro was secured by national umbrella organisations of war veterans (UBR 90), which was achieved through several meetings and contacts months before the actual forums.

### *In BiH*

CNA's local partners in this mini-series of public forums that were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina were: NGO Sezam from Zenica and Centre for Informative Decontamination of

Youth (Centar za informativnu dekontaminaciju mladih) from Banja Luka. Since finding possible partner organisations and beginning cooperation with them is one of the key points of the entire project, it was especially important to us to devote enough time and attention to it. Here are the most important criteria for the selection of partner organisations:

- Readiness and a clearly expressed motivation to work in the area of dealing with the past, i.e. to start the process of the implementation of public forums with ex-combatants
- Legitimacy of partner organizations in their local communities
- Capacities to organise and offer logistic support for public forums
- Feeling that there's a mutual understanding with respect to the project's goals, and the values we want to promote with the project

It was also important to us to have partner organizations from both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Having in mind the experience gathered while we were organising the pilot series of public forums in Serbia, in 2002, when we faced a relatively little interest of partner organisations for the goals and the core of the project they were working on together with us, we tried to intensify the feeling of involvement in the essence of the project. We wanted to avoid the situation where the local partners were only in charge of the technical aspect of the whole activity.

Joint meeting of CNA team and both local partners offered a chance to discuss the idea and the purpose of the project, as well as to work out the agreement in detail about distribution of responsibility. Local partners were given some space for their more intense creative involvement in the preparation of public forums (like for example we jointly created posters and leaflets for the public forum). It was at that point where we had most difficulties in communication with local partners since we had a disagreement regarding how the posters were supposed to look like, and what message they were supposed to deliver. Situation was additionally complicated due to the lack of time for constructive discussions and agreements during the preparation of public forums (especially in the case of the one in Zenica).

With time distance, we feel partly satisfied with our cooperation with local partners.

### *Main difficulties with partners*

- In BiH it was difficult to find a local partner organisation at all due to perceived risk that such organisation bears. Many potential partner feared potential troubles that could happen and hence made recommendations to other, which went in circles. Those who dared joining this process therefore earn high credit for their courage.
- The absence of consensus within the whole partner organisation when it comes to willingness to work on dealing with the past (in case of SEZAM). That is the reason why three persons who were in charge of the organisation of the public forum in Zenica, were under the extremely high pressure and really with a minimum of support from the people from the local community, even though their own personal motivation was very strong
- Crucial disagreements concerning the approach and values that we find important to promote (in case of Centre for Informative Decontamination of Youth). The consequences of that problem were some concrete difficulties, such as for instance disregard of the opinion of CNA team members with respect to the way posters and fliers announcing public forum were supposed to look like (partner suggestion: an image of warrior with dove in his hand).

- Lack of space for giving feedback due to an immense pressure and high level of stress of the local partners.
- Another difficulty local partners from Zenica expressed, with respect to the fact that they were left out from the part of the project that was related to the selection of participants and the work with them before the public forum.

On the other hand, the main source of satisfaction for us is the fact the both partner organisations showed interest for further work in dealing with the past, and we experience the NGO Sezam from Zenica as our ally in the activities in this field that we plan to implement in the future. It is even more important since the entire picture of the nongovernmental organisations' sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina gives away an impression of unwillingness and disinterest for a more concrete work in this area.

### *Learning points:*

- Motivation of local partners is proportional to achieved results.
- If we accept the concept that foresees more involvement of the partner organisations in the project on the level of ideas, than the general impression will be that much more time needs to be dedicated to discussions about key aspects of such way of work, and to define much more clearly mechanisms one may reach for in case that two weeks before the forum we find ourselves in a situation where the entire process is blocked.
- Think about new models of support to local partners, especial in highly stressful situations.
- Empower, even more, the existing capacities in Bosnia and Herzegovina for work in the area of dealing with the past (by this, we primarily mean the people who went through some of our educational programs, whether they are members of NGOs or work in other organisations and institutions). Organise a joint meeting of all the individuals we recognise as potential partners and present further steps within this segment of peace building.
- On time preparatory workshop/meetings with all local partners and some ex-combatants proved essential (in case of SCG forums) as empowerment and motivating for the process. This meeting included responsibility sharing and boosted ongoing communication about issues which were needed to be resolved quickly on the way. Hence, barely no difficulties appeared except in Kraljevo case, where it seems that motivation lacked.

## **LOKAL AUTHORITIES**

**Local authority** support was present at all 5 forums in SCG, it included free municipality space for forums to be held and at some cases also presence of local representatives. In Vlasotince and Bijelo Polje this support has been exceptionally visible and important. Credit for this success goes again to the account of local partners.

The support from local authorities of Zenica and Banja Luka was declarative and symbolic. After several meetings of our local partners with city structures of Zenica and Banja Luka, they gave their support for the organisation of public forums. In Banja Luka, one of the auditoriums of the Banski dvori palace (which is also the local government and the government of Republic of Srpska headquarters) was given at our disposal (for a certain fee, of course). For us, the important was a symbolic meaning of holding such forum in that place, but at the same time we missed having some representatives of the authorities at the event.

The matter of support of the local authorities and their cooperation with us brought along another characteristic of the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that is the "delicacy" of such activities from the point of view of those who are in power. That "delicacy" exceeds purely political or party's interests and has more to do with the authorities' fear of infringing some commonplaces of everyday life of Bosnia and Herzegovina (like for example: "Bosniaks were the only victims of the aggression"; "defensive war in the Republic of Srpska" and not questioning the foundations Republic of Srpska was established upon).

### *Learning points*

- Much more thorough and timely discussions with local authorities, with the presentation of what has already been accomplished with public forums in Bosnia and Herzegovina, so far. That may narrow the space for different unfounded interpretations and speculations about what forums really are or what they inevitably bring along.
- Valid for small communities is the lesson to include in talks with authorities, representatives of war veteran associations, if their support has been won previously (Vlasotince case).

## **FORUM SPEAKERS**

### *In SCG*

Prior to forums two trainings have been held for potential speakers which proved to be an excellent way to prepare speakers but also to provide a way for better choice of speakers. Evaluation conducted by Berghof Center confirms the importance of trainings in regard to raising motivation, awareness and trust building among future speakers.

This has allowed a process and communication between speakers and organisers which included evaluations and feedback sessions, which gave impact to improving of messages sent out. Previous difficulty of undefined or sometimes contradicting messages being sent out as respond to the question "How towards sustainable peace?" were minimised during the last series of forums in SCG. Speakers empowered each other and have produced a process among themselves which resulted in very brave and direct appearances that can be seen as exceptionally motivating for viewers and listeners to initiate a process of questioning responsibilities for the violent past. The audience response was very positive and encouraging. More information on this is available in Newspaper supplements (also in English translation).

Whereby different level of clearness in regard to peacebuilding can be registered between different speakers, general impression is that very strong pro-peace messages have been addressed by ex-combatants, which were perceived as an honest effort of questioning their own and also social responsibilities for past wars and violence, just as current discrimination issues.

### *In BiH*

Five ex-combatants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, who had fought on different sides, participated on two public forums. What we consider to be a success is a positive reaction



of the public to the fact that the space was given to people, who had been directly involved in the war, to talk about their experiences and views of the future.

On the other hand, not being able to apply in practice one of the last year's main learning points regarding the fact that all participants' need to go through a training together in order to develop more sensitisation for some key aspects of peace building and to become better acquainted to one another is a big handicap.

The reason for such situation was a delayed response from the donors which financially supported the trainings with former soldiers.

The lack of the training was in a certain way compensated with the joint meetings of participants and organisers (one of them had been held few weeks before the public forum while the other two occurred just before the activity was implemented). Meetings provided plenty of time for the participants to get to know each other and for building some safe space and support within the participants' group. Some "difficult" questions we supposed the audience might ask were also discussed. That enabled participants to be more open to each other and to overcome some existing fears.

### *Serious difficulties regarding forums in BiH*

- Unfocused and non-transparent discussions of some participants (especially with respect to the views of the future and ways to reach sustainable peace).
- Dubious statements during the forum that carried a lot of unaware violent messages.
- Occasional frivolous behaviour of two participants during the forum in Zenica (smoking during the event, inappropriate jokes etc.)
- Breach of commitment taken by the participant from the Republic of Srpska (which we consider to be a result of his lack of true motivation to participate in the project)

### *Learning points*

Not make any more compromise of this kind. One of the most important things that should exist before entering the forum is commitment and sharing of good feeling with participants, and the best way to achieve that is to have training before series of public forums start.

Special segment of the preparation activities was related to the contacts and meetings with various veterans' associations from Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republic of Srpska. Cooperation with those organisations is in the very focus of the project, therefore it was the direction we followed while trying to establish contacts. Open support that would include stating the name of a specific association on the posters and on the invitations to forums, unfortunately failed. The result of the meeting was mainly general support given to the project, but there was no chance to state the name of that association as co-organizer of the forum. Even though two participants are members of veterans' associations as well, we had to organize the forums without any "visible" support of the associations here mentioned. Our opinion is that the reasons for such an attitude of the people from the organisations we got in touch with are: extremely difficult economic situation of the veteran population and their focus on the chances to receive financial support, i.e. the lack of motivation for more explicit engagement in some social processes; the image of NGOs as profit oriented organisations without any strongpoint amongst citizens; mutual frictions and confronted political positions of different veteran associations that make it more difficult to offer transparent support to peace activities.

## **PROJECT COORDINATION AND MULTIPLICATION**

### *In SCG*

Despite often very hectic work schedule around forums, being aware of all the different tasks to be shared, the organising team managed without greater difficulties, whereby this was made possible thanks to enormous engagement of local partners.

In regard to multiplication it appears obvious that local partners who bore large weight of action, have hence been a part of multiplication process. Some of them are already included in other activities regarding the issue dealing with past (e.g. collecting verbal histories from wartime).

War veteran organisations have been exposed in media as partners in project, which opens doors to future work in this field, but by no means guarantees that they themselves will be initiators of such actions.

Multiplication effect can be expected from journalists who developed interest in the issue in the course of reporting from forums and accompanying events. Some journalists we worked with were in war themselves and hence showed motivation to work on this issue, but experiencing at the same time a constructive way to approach such delicate issue.

CNA and our local partners received various expressions of support for the action, from individuals and groups. This indicates that it has been perceived as one appropriate way to address the issue. It could be that the effect of initiation of other actions can be produced, but such conclusion can not be drawn on current experience.

### *In BiH*

Having in mind that two public forums which were held in March 2003, were the first concrete steps in the work on Dealing with the past that CNA made in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as the first more complete public appearance of our organisation, we are quite satisfied with the effect of initiation, i.e. multiplication.

After the forums were completed, we established contacts with several former soldiers (from Zenica, Sarajevo, Nevesinje) who were interested and motivated to participate in future activities that CNA would organise, but also to gain and build their own capacities for organising activities on their own. The important point is that one of the people who took part on the forums is also taking part in this year's Training for Trainers Program with a great desire to continue with his independent work on peace building with cooperation and support from CNA.

Contacts with reporters of different «global» media (FTV; TV OBN; BH radio) indicate that there's quite a lot of willingness within media to be our vital allies in the work on peace building, and to make certain steps towards their more active role in that process.

Willingness of the organisations and individuals with whom we cooperated on these public forums to continue with their work on dealing with the past, and to keep that problem in the focus of their work, points out the level of our goal achievement to motivate people for work on this theme.

All in all, we are satisfied with the effect we've accomplished by "making waves" in Bosnia and Herzegovina, because we're under the impression that many things are moving, and that the space for our further work in this field in Bosnia and Herzegovina has significantly widened, after the initial steps were made. It is important to us to notice and recognize

that citizens need these themes to be treated in a serious manner, but outside of the academic or political circles. It is our impression that there's quite a big number of people interested in telling their own story and in using the space offered in those forums.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND IDEAS FOR CONTINUATION

### *In regard to public forums in BiH*

This year's first experiences drawn from the public forums in Bosnia and Herzegovina clearly indicate several important points that we can consider to be our guidelines for the continuation of the project in BiH.

Current socio-political situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina leaves much more space for this kind of activity than it may seem before the actual implementation of similar ideas. One should have in mind and count on all the potential risks and dangers, whilst being sensitised for the characteristics of the local community that we "enter" with the implementation of the forums. One should also keep in mind that it is possible to find those who will support such idea on various levels, therefore it is quite realistic to conclude that the space for further activities of this kind which has been created, should be taken. It is especially important that the activities implemented up to date in the area of Dealing With the Past, and the fact that our organisation is being recognised from the local community, as one of the carriers of this process, oblige us to maintain an active approach and keep the initiative in this field, and we sincerely hope that we will not be left alone in it. That is why we also see the future role of CNA as the one of the initiator, but also of a collaborator on new, fresh ideas brought by other organisations and individuals.

After having organized 11 public forums with ex-combatants (Serbia 7, BiH 2, Montenegro 2) CNA is planning to organise another series of public forums in Bosnia and Herzegovina, at the end of 2004. With all the learning points, stated above, that need to be taken into account, it is necessary to emphasise that there's a need for more time for the preparation of the upcoming forums, to accomplish even closer and more thorough cooperation with various institutions and organisations in which we recognise potential for constructive dealing with peace building, based on values of nonviolence.

### *Guidelines for future public forums in Bosnia and Herzegovina*

- Next forums should have a regional character, i.e. speakers group should also include former combatants from Serbia and Croatia. Apart from our continuous support to the regional approach, in this particular context it is important because we want to change the focus of the discussion, from a strictly "Bosnian story", thus giving a contribution to better understanding of the regional processes and their interdependence.
- Try as much as possible to include people who went through our training events (especially Training for Trainers) in the process of preparation, implementation and evaluation of the forums. That's why there's an idea to gather them and ask them to start together with us, with the process of the organisation of another series of public forums in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND IDEAS FOR CONTINUATION ON DEALING WITH THE PAST

CNA plans to finish the series of public forums with an upcoming series of 3 which will be held in BiH. There is a group in Croatia, headed by one of our frequent speakers, which is associated with the Centre for Peace Studies in Zagreb, which is seriously planning to organise forums there. Although, this was planned already in 2003, it seems that things get closer and can be expected in 2004. This group will be supported with all available resources of CNA, including contacts, experiences etc.

CNA does not plan any further repetition of series of public forums with ex-combatants in the future, but is dedicated to support a growing network of people motivated to work in this field, within their respective communities. We are concluding that sufficient initiative has been achieved which opened grounds for further work in this sphere. Building on this, through our contact and regional networking meeting organised, several cross-regional cooperation were established. An example is the work of Documentation Centre on wars 1991-1999 (Belgrade), which cooperates with several former CNA TfT trainees, to collect oral testimonies of war, which are being published by the Centre (2 editions already completed).

CNA will work on production of the documentary film about ex-combatants engaged in peacebuilding from the region, which will be a test for potential implementation of numerous ideas related to production of media material (in particular for TV), related to dealing with the past issue and peacebuilding in general. Many ideas relate to awareness raising of the need of overcoming prejudice and re-establishing communication across ethnic communities.

This need arises from dissatisfaction with the level of capacity of journalists, perceived during numerous contacts we had, to approach the subject at own initiative, with necessary sensitisation for the issue of dealing with the past.

Beside inclusion of ex-combatants in forums, which are still to be held and within documentary production, in communication with them, we will seek for forms of further support for their own initiatives that may arise, hence aiming to support sustainable peacebuilding orientated to build capacity within war veteran organisations, or at least individual activists of these organisations. For example CNA has been asked to help in building contacts between Serb and Croat war veteran organisations, at initiative of the veteran organisation from Serbia, which supported the public forums this year. It is rather unclear what goals such meeting would have, but is an idea worth at least of serious consideration.

CNA will discuss possibilities to engage in gaining further publicity for story-telling, also by other people across the region affected by wars, and not only combatants. What form could it take remains yet, to be seen.

It must be noticed that conditions are not the same in relation to all previous wars. In the example of Kosovo, the violent conflict is basically still ongoing in low intensity, which leaves little space for loud public actions, but demands "silent work" on capacity, communication and trust building. An example of such process is an ongoing Training for Trainers, where 5 people of Albanian origin from Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro are attending. Those are the individuals that some of future cooperation can be built upon.

## MAJOR GUIDELINES TO DEALING WITH THE PAST

It would be exaggerated to claim that public opinion change was or can be achieved by the work of a single organisation. However in order to make accountable contributions, it appears crucial that actors that engage in the work on dealing with the past, are perceived as legitimate, transparent and undiscredited.

- **Legitimacy** in one hand is attained by public recognition as important actors, by public visibility. Furthermore, allpartisan approach is essential and demands inclusion of people from different conflict sides. These perceptions are built through successes or failures to build partnerships with actors beside usual NGO scene which in itself is widely perceived as parasite to society, or as being directed by foreigners.

- **Transparency** with one's own agenda and motivation is important. Such approach is essential in partnership building which are not in subordinate manner, but based on a minimum of values recognised, focussed on crystallised mutual interests recognised. Differences should not be an obstacle, or avoided, but should be made an object of discussion and feedback, without judgement making. Furthermore transparency regards making organisational plans, reports and goals, easily accessible to public and fostering interorganisational exchange and cooperation .

- **Credibility** is hard to attain and easy to lose in the public opinion. It seems to be crucial to act according to values one pledges to be representing. Whoever acts in the field of dealing with the past, will be made, sooner or later a target for attacks aiming to disrupt their credibility. CNA was once attacked in newspapers by one member of a competitive war veteran organisation, than the one which is our partner, with invented arguments aiming to disrupt our credibility. Fortunately the newspapers have printed our denial, which did not strive to discredit a person who did attack us, but to clarify alleged intranparencies.

CNA believes to have so far managed, despite or maybe exactly because, of public engagement in different ex-Yu countries/regions, to attain and retain legitimacy, transparency and credibility. Public nature of the activities that we conducted gave us exposure and hence visibility in public, which is a position different to the one we had with low visibility cross-regional educational work. It is at the same time a credit and obligation to use it in future for more public actions. Therefore, many of our thoughts revolve about using this capacity in future more frequently and effectively.

### Note:

Three publications about public forums "Four views" are published:

- Publication about the forums held in Bosnia and Herzegovina is published in daily newspapers *Nezavisne novine* and *Oslobodjenje* in April 2003, and it is available on our web page (translation into English):

[http://www.nenasilje.org/aktivnosti/cetiri\\_pogleda/pdf/pdf-03bh/4views-03BH.pdf](http://www.nenasilje.org/aktivnosti/cetiri_pogleda/pdf/pdf-03bh/4views-03BH.pdf)

- Publication about the forums held in Serbia is published in daly newspapers *Danas* in November 2003, translation into English is available here:

[www.nenasilje.org/aktivnosti/cetiri\\_pogleda/pdf/pdf-03scg/4views-Danas.pdf](http://www.nenasilje.org/aktivnosti/cetiri_pogleda/pdf/pdf-03scg/4views-Danas.pdf)

- Publication about the forums held in Montenegro is published in daily newspapers *Dan* and *Pobjeda* in December 2003, available only in Serbian/Bosnian/Croatian language:

[www.nenasilje.org/aktivnosti/cetiri\\_pogleda/pdf/pdf-03scg/CetiriPogleda-CG.pdf](http://www.nenasilje.org/aktivnosti/cetiri_pogleda/pdf/pdf-03scg/CetiriPogleda-CG.pdf)

## 3. OTHER ACTIVITIES

### 3.1. Launch of the book edition 'People in War'

*Organiser: Documentation centre Wars 1991-99  
Belgrade, January 16 2004, the Media Centre*

Documentation centre Wars 1991-99 (DCR) from Belgrade organised a launch of its book edition 'People in War' on the occasion of first two books (out of the planned 20 books) from this edition within the project Oral History of the Wars 1991-99 being published. The titles of these books are 'Warfare' and 'Civilians' Destinies'. The books contain transcribed interviews lead by DCR associates with direct or indirect participants in the wars taking place during the previous decade, as well as of what preceded them and what came out of them. Persons who had been interviewed as part of this 'informal history', as it was called at the launch, were not only former participants of the war, but also refugees, civilians, foreigners, activists. The idea was to, as opposed to the extreme experiences present in the public and apparently 'more interesting', emphasise the experiences of ordinary people who have been through these events. A quotation from the invitation to this conference clearly marks the reasons for initiating this project: *'Oral histories are not historiography, but are an important historiographic and not only historiographic source. They convey things that are, as a rule, not to be found in the official historiography: immensely important details, atmosphere, microcontext as a personal memory of a super-personal situation, they speak of the past in its present language'*.

This edition contributes greatly to the process of facing the past and at a very individual level, both with the interviewees and the readers.

Participants of the launch were Drinka Gojkovic (of DCR), Nenad Vukosavljevic (of CNA), Milica Mihajlovic (of Jewish History Museum of Belgrade) and Nebojsa Petrovic (of the Faculty of Philosophy, Belgrade).

For more information, please contact DCR, <http://www.dcr.org.yu/>  
e-mail: [office@dcr.org.yu](mailto:office@dcr.org.yu)

It is our pleasure to announce that a certain number of participants of our program *Training for Trainers* will co-operate with the DCR on future books from this edition, collecting *oral histories* of people in their environment.

### 3.2. Conference 'Society without soldiers? Militarism and alternatives'

*Organiser: Zene u crnom (ZuC) (Women in Black), Belgrade  
Belgrade, February 14-15 2004*

A member of CNA team (Milan Colic Humljan) participated at the two-day conference "A Society Without Soldiers? Militarism and the Alternatives", held at the Centre for Cultural Decontamination. The conference was organised by the Network for Conscientious Objection - one of the groups operating within the organisation Zene u crnom from Belgrade. The Conference consisted of three panel discussions: CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION: YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW; DO THE ARMS ACHIEVE PEACE?;

PATRIARCHATE, ARMY, DISCRIMINATION. After each discussion, there was room for discussion with people who attended.

Many people attended all three panels and they were followed by dynamic discussions of participants and the guests. Starting with the first discussion about the bill on conscientious objection and its application, through the end of the conference, there were many analyses on the current state of things and possibilities for improvement. Considering that most of the participants were of activist background, there were many experiences from the actual field work and talk about the achieved results, as well as about the difficulties they have encountered. There were different points of view and some of the opinions were criticised, which additionally enriched the contents of the discussions themselves.

It is very important that this conference has been organised, but it is also of great importance for this type of meetings to be organised on a regular basis, the meetings of people who work on the issues of antimilitarism and alternatives to militant social constructions that very much imbue our everyday life and have great impact on social relations, both at a local and a more global regional level. Decomposing these rigid military doctrines, criticising their postulates and things they rely on is certainly an important segment in the work on, primarily, demilitarisation of the region, de-escalation of xenophobia, negating the standpoint in which patriarchy is the sole approved value, but also on building regional communication and building lasting peace as a value we work on achieving.

Many things heard at this conference would be very important to express and advocate. There were talks about how 'peace troops' can't bring peace, that peace is not merely a state of un-war; that the concept of safety must be based on good communication instead of military doctrines and further arming; that joining the NATO doesn't mean safety; that there is a distinct relation between the state, the army, patriarchy and violence...

This meeting/conference makes a significant contribution to the attempts for people who occasionally and in a not mutually connected ways deal with these significant issues to meet each other, exchange experiences and become empowered for further work. Also, it gives us an important contribution to the attempts of informal networking of people/organisations based on the values we struggle for and the needs we have, and not on the donors' wishes, or 'to access the money more easily'. Modesty in organising the conference by the organisers (no projectors, lap tops or video links) further contributes to the feeling of empowerment.

For more information and material about the conference, please contact 'Zene u Crnom' Belgrade, [stasazen@eunet.yu](mailto:stasazen@eunet.yu), [www.wib-zeneucrnombelgrade.org](http://www.wib-zeneucrnombelgrade.org)

### **3.3. Regional seminar 'Documentation, Truth, Responsibility: Creating conditions for facing the past in former Yugoslavia'**

*Organiser: Humanitarian Right Fund  
Vukovar, Croatia, February 20-21 2004*

A regional seminar 'Documentation, Truth, Responsibility: Creating conditions for facing the past in former Yugoslavia' was held in Vukovar Institute for peace research and education on February 20 through 21 2004. The organiser of the seminar was the

Humanitarian Right Fund (FHP). Invited by FHP, a CNA member participated at the meeting (Milan Colic Humljan).

The seminar was conceived as a continuation of the process of the work on networking people in former SFRY territories and establishing co-operation on creating a central database on war crimes of the wars of the previous decade. As was presented, the final product of this work should be creating a Centre for documentation and research, the database of which (most likely virtual, an internet database) would be accessible to all who have the need for such data. The organisations directly involved in the process of establishing such a centre are: FHP, Centre for Peace Studies (Zagreb), Centre for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights (Osijek), State Committee for Collecting Facts about the War Crimes (Sarajevo) and others. Prior to this one, an international seminar on the subject of facing the past was held in Budapest, and focused on collecting world wide experiences from the work in this field. A part of the participants of February meeting was also present at the Budapest one.

Following the presentation of the work of most organisations and analysis of local circumstances in particular states, the talks on the creation of the database began, and the ways in which it could be formed. The organisations that would be carriers of the process of establishing a documentation centre had the need for concrete agreements, technical and logistic, while the other participants could not find their role in these agreements.

This seminar is certainly important for making a step further in the process of facing the past in our countries, and its particular value lies in the fact that it was regional in character. However, if the presence of organisations who are not directly involved in the work on war crimes was wanted in order for them to state their opinion on the proposed project or simply be informed about it, we think that our presence would make more sense if there was room for such a discussion at the very beginning of the seminar. As it is, what remains for us is to wonder why we have been invited to take part and what has been expected of us.

For more information and reports from the seminar, please address the Humanitarian Right Fund at [www.hlc.org.yu](http://www.hlc.org.yu), [office@hlc.org.yu](mailto:office@hlc.org.yu)



## 4. ANNEX

### 4.1. Things are getting back to normal?!

*Article by CNA activists published in daily newspapers «Danas» 24.3.2003.*

Almost a week has passed since the gruesome wave of violence spread in Kosovo and then in Belgrade, Nis, Novi Sad and other towns in Serbia, tensions also growing in BH, Macedonia... Hardly anyone has remained indifferent to the scenes of tearing down and burning houses, churches and mosques, and all sorts of violence demonstrated by the perpetrators of these actions.

Once more we, faced with the catastrophe, face an uncomfortable feeling of helplessness, with the condition when a reaction is called for and necessary, and the room for it is extremely narrowed.

The appeals to stop violence, condemning shameful savagery in the streets of our cities and condemnation of brutality performed upon Serbian minority in Kosovo, expressions of disapproval, fear, horror at the escalation of conflict, a wish for some other voices to be heard in the overall exaltation and hate speech, to offer some different solution.... that is about all that can be done when people are being killed, religious object are on fire and a huge number of people feel a basic, physical insecurity where they live.

According to the news coming from Kosovo, things are getting back to 'normal'. It's hard to suppress a wry smile at the 'normalcy' that must be. There aren't more than ten people a day dead in Kosovo, no mosques are on fire in Serbia, the situation is 'normal', we can sigh in relief... The stories about possible options for the future status of Kosovo make it to the foreground and it seems that there is no real and constructive solution for this hot potato called Kosovo. Albanian politicians (both men and women?) have offered an universal cure for all social diseases - independence of Kosovo, and Serbian prime minister Kostunica has, addressing protesters in front of the Serbian government building, stated: 'We'll be back to Kosovo!'

One needs to have a lot of good will and benevolence (which, by the way, none of the above mentioned deserve) to glean in the offered **slogans**, oh, sorry, 'solutions', at least some of the social values (respect of human rights, feeling of security based on mutual trust instead of armament race) that would make the life in Kosovo fit for a human, be it Serbian or Albanian.

It is also important to recall that the famous democracy, the word many will casually toss around these days, is fortunately not an infinitely elastic term, not a mantra the chanting of which makes for a firm alibi to perform violence and disrespect basic human rights.

One shouldn't forget that there are some more basic and less raped values and concepts, the necessity of which also becomes pronounced in this, nobody knows which in a row, post-conflict or post-war period. Instead of placing all responsibility in the hands of our valiant politicians, let's recognise our own responsibility for the huge violent potential of our society, and also for the shocking lack of empathy and understanding for what has been recognised as 'other' and hostile. Well done for those who can be consoled by the famous sentence 'They're no better either', but these statements only bare the depth and

misunderstanding of our problem and certainly don't amnesty us of responsibility. It would be too simple (and inaccurate) to be lulled in a comforting thought about our problem being solely the 500 (or 5000) hooligans who, stronger than the police, orgy in the streets of our major cities, just as it is extremely cynical to state that the basic problem of Kosovo is in a small bunch of extremists who everybody is against, but, there, you know... nothing to be done there... More likely, it would be that the gigantic share of it all lies in the social awareness and the atmosphere both 'here' and 'there', that simply invites to violence and force, terror against a minority and a constant marking of one's OWN territory. And it is also likely that the majority of us has supported it in one way or another - turning a deaf ear to 'Kill, cut throat, exterminate the Shiptar'; through accepting and swallowing speech of hatred we are abundantly being served in the media, schools, streets; through harbouring prejudices and extremely casual and benevolent relation to them (such as the frequently heard on 'What's the problem with calling them Shiptars?'); through accepting the widespread, conservative opinion that preserving and affirming one's own identity is only possible through detachment and confrontation with different identities; through being lulled into the fairy tales of the heavenly people that loses in peace, but wins in the war and the like; through inability to recognise the entire range of violence and discrimination that people who have identities different from widely accepted Serbian-orthodox national canon are exposed to daily. If we go back just a bit and remember everything that has been said and written about Albanians and muslims for years now, it's logical that now we are in turn a bit confused by the unison condemnations of the mosques being burned down and the statements saying that every last one of us (except, probably, for those 500 hooligans) are ashamed of the violence. If we allow ourselves a bit of cynicism, we can very well ask ourselves what it is that we as a society are ashamed of, whether of the hatred that exists or, on the contrary, of the fact that we have allowed the hatred (that is otherwise 'quite acceptable') to be demonstrated in the way which will be plainly visible to the entire world?

Until we've accepted that the statement 'Shiptars are separatists, filthy and ugly, primitive and mean, they multiply' and 'Serbs are butchers, illiterate and base thieves with the aggression in their genes' easily spawn horrid violence; as long as we harbour hatred as a part of tradition and folklore and as long as we don't become aware of the fact that one of the priorities of our societies should be dealing with decontamination of prejudices and the violence-bearing seeds, there will be no good solution for Kosovo, but also not for BH, Macedonia, Montenegro etc. Someone will always be a victim, and from the position of a victim and the feeling of being threatened someone will always reach for the new cycles of violence...

We are ALL responsible for finding the alternatives to violence, to re-examine them and apply them; to bear in mind that the large majority of people is still *against* violence; not to break the feeble bridges of mutual trust; to strengthen them and expand them; to point our finger, as loudly as we can, to the violence around us and to fight against it, to be aware that things will not become 'normal' as long as the basic criterion for 'normalcy' is the lack of killing and setting fires. Let's define ourselves the normal and desired condition of society and to deal with profound problems not waiting for the next escalation of physical violence to make us write appeals and statements... Till next time...

## 5. CNA WORK PLAN

### ***Training for Trainers 2003/04, Phases VII and VIII***

Two last phases of the *Training for Trainers in Nonviolent Conflict Transformation Programme (TfT)* which started in July 2003, have been foreseen to take place in 2004.

Within the phase VII, which will last for about five months, participants of the programme with the support of CNA team will implement the activities designed during the previous phases of this programme. This is one of the key points of the entire training because its goal is implementation in practice of all the things that were worked on so far, as well as empowerment and networking of participants for their further work, i.e. work on multiplication that is one of our priorities.

Here are the dates and the themes of the trainings that will be organised by participants of the programme:

1. **March 19-25, 2004** Training in nonviolent conflict transformation for educational workers of Bosnia and Herzegovina,
2. **March 19-25, 2004** Peace building in the areas of former Yugoslavia affected by war through education and empowerment in the field of nonviolent conflict transformation,
3. **March 26-April 1, 2004** Training in nonviolent conflict transformation on regional level,
4. **April 17-22, 2004** Together against discrimination - for youth of Ulcinj municipality,
5. **April 25- May 1, 2004** Training in nonviolent conflict transformation for youth of Macedonia,
6. **May 6-12, 2004** Training in nonviolent conflict transformation for educational workers from Serbia and Macedonia.

The eighth, last phase of the TfT programme will be held from **May 21-25, 2004**. It foresees joint evaluation of all the phases of the Training for Trainers Programme as a whole, as well as discussions about participant's future plans, and the kind of support they need from CNA and from each other. Some time will be dedicated to discussions about networking and cooperation between participants (and CNA) and continuation of their work on peace building.

### ***Basic Trainings in Nonviolent Conflict Transformation***

During 2004, we plan to organise five *Basic Trainings in Nonviolent Conflict Transformation*:

1. From February 20-March 1, 2004, in Tivat / Montenegro
2. From April 16-26, 2004, in Ulcinj / Montenegro
3. From July 9-19, 2004
4. From October 1-11, 2004
5. From November 19-29, 2004

## ***Networking Meeting on the Theme «Approaches to Work in the Field of Peace Building and Nonviolent Conflict Transformation in the Region»***

After December's meeting on the theme of «Dealing with the Past», we will organise the second one from the series of three foreseen networking meetings, from **March 5-11**. The theme of the meeting will be «Approaches to Work in the Field of Peace Building and Nonviolent Conflict Transformation in the Region».

Meeting will gather people who deal with peace education in the region. This meeting should offer some space for the analysis of work and various approaches in the field of nonviolent conflict transformation and peace building on regional level, for discussion and exchange. The idea is to exchange experiences up to date, as well as views, dilemmas, difficulties and successes we've had, through the discussion and mutual reflection and to try to initiate critical review of some of the practices in this field, present in our region, so far.

### ***Work on Dealing With the Past***

«Dealing with the Past» programme which we have been working on for the past two years will continue in 2004. After 11 public forums that we've organised, in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, we will organise another three in Bosnia and Herzegovina, entitled «Four views; From the Past HOW I FOUND MYSELF IN WAR Towards the Future HOW TO REACH SUSTAINABLE PEACE?» with ex-combatants from Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. We find this programme, which demands our great engagement and a lot of thought, to be extremely important for work on peace building in the region. Public forums will be held in **October and November 2004** in three towns of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The exact dates and places where forums will take place will be agreed after CNA Sarajevo office explores all the possibilities.

As a part of the «Dealing With the Past» Programme we will organize a training (in two phases) for ex-combatants of wars (in the period from 1990-1995) from Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia that will be held from **June 18-25, 2004** and from **July 23-26, 2004**. This programme (training and a follow-up meeting) aims to open communication between people who fought on different sides, to empower them to work on peace building processes and to stimulate cooperation, but also to prepare one group of participants for participation in public forums which are going to take place in Bosnia and Herzegovina, by the end of the year.

We also plan to complete a documentary movie about ex-combatants and people from their environment this year. We started the work on collecting material (interviews) in June last year.

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

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In Belgrade, April 2004

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