

CENTAR ZA NENASILNU AKCIJU
CENTRE FOR NONVIOLENT ACTION



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3-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, Yugoslavia 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!

Here we are with another 3-month report. These were three months filled with different activities and events that demanded lots of time and energy. That is why we're running late with this report and we apologise for it. We organised two basic trainings, together with our colleagues from Sarajevo office: in Ulcinj, Montenegro and Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina. You can read about it in the 3-month Report of our Sarajevo office. We held a training in Zvonacka banja, Serbia, which was organized by a local NGO from Babušnica, «Centar za razvoj gradanske svesti» (Centre for Development of Civic Awareness). We prepared and organized public debates in four cities in Serbia, named "Four Views - From the past: how I found myself in war, towards the future: how to reach sustainable peace». Our guests in these public debates were people who had participated in past wars in the region of former Yugoslavia. This was the first time we organized such debates. We've also started to prepare a one-year Training for Trainers programme, which begins on July 5th 2002.

In the past term, our Belgrade office moved downtown, to 33 Svetogorska Street. Having an office in a central city area makes work much easier, unlike work in our old office in the suburb, when we were spending a lot more time just commuting. Our legal status of a foreign NGO is getting even more complicated; we still don't know what are our rights and obligations, since the bill (on NGOs) has not been introduced yet, which makes us feel rather insecure. The Parliament accepted a new bill, introduced by The National Bank of Yugoslavia. For us it means limited withdrawal of cash from our bank account. We can withdraw foreign currency from our account only for the purpose of travelling abroad, and the amount of dinars we can withdraw is limited. We realize that National Bank imposed these conditions in order to make the dinar the only currency for payment in Yugoslavia and that is all right. However, it makes our work much more difficult or sometimes even impossible. For example, we cannot legally reimburse the expenditure of travel costs to training participants who come from other countries of former Yugoslavia. All this has given us headache and lot more paper work to take care of and it requires lot more energy ...

OD PROŠLOSTI **OTKUD JA U RATU?**
 KA BUDUĆNOSTI **KAKO KA TRAJNOM MIRU?**

ČETIRI POGLEDA

INĐIJA
 3. 6. 2002, PONEDELIJAK u 20h
 SALA GRADSKJE BIBLIOTEKE

Gosti tribine su učesnici u ratovima na prostoru bivše Jugoslavije:

ADNAN HASANBEGOVIĆ iz Sarajeva
GORDAN BODOG iz Zagreba
NEBOJŠA JOVANOVIĆ iz Beograda
SAŠA DUJOVIĆ iz Beograda

VODITELJICA: KATARINA KATANIĆ
 ORGANIZUJE: CENTAR ZA NENASILNU AKCIJU u saradnji sa OMLADINSKIM KULTURNIM KLUBOM - INĐIJA
 UZ PODRŠKU: SO INĐIJA • DOKUMENTACIONOG CENTRA "RATOVİ 1991-99" • MINISTARSTVA INOSTRANIH POSLOVA ŠVAJCARSKE • UDRUŽENJA RATNIH VOJNIH INVALIDA OPŠTINE ZEMUN

LEAFLET FOR THE PUBLIC DEBATES "Four Views - From the past: how I found myself in war, towards the future: how to reach sustainable peace»

1. MAIN ACTIVITIES

1.1 Basic Training in Nonviolent Conflict Transformation

(Ulcinj, Montenegro, April 8 - 18, 2002)

In April, CNA implemented the twelfth Basic Training in the town of Ulcinj, at the Adriatic coast of Montenegro. We received 162 applications, so it was very difficult to choose only 20 participants.

This time, we had more participants coming from media and political parties, which was our intention, in the first place. CNA considers that people from media and political parties carry a great potential for multiplication in their workplace, but less potential for participation in Training for Trainers Programme. Having in mind that we've had already plenty of candidates for the Training for Trainers, from two previous Basic Training events, this time we decided to invite more people from media and political parties. Therefore, there was a journalist from RTV Bosnia and Herzegovina News Programme, an editor of a local TV station from Kragujevac, Serbia, an activist of Social-democratic Union from Serbia, an activist of Liberal Party from Croatia, a student of political science from Skopje, Macedonia, an activist of Student's Union from Croatia, an activist of Bosniak coalition from Kosovo, activists of different NGOs and two local people from the OSCE mission in Kosovo. We had more people from Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia in comparison to people from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, since we intended to focus more on the present conflict in the triangle of Serbia-Kosovo-Macedonia.

There were 18 participants instead of 20, 11 male and 7 female. One person cancelled a day before the training, and the other simply didn't show up. Gender imbalance was certainly noticeable during the work process.

Training team included: Ivana from CNA's Belgrade office and Nedžad, Nenad and Tamara from Sarajevo office.

Training was financially supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland. This is a chance to thank them.

The most important focus of this training was a reflection to the situation in Kosovo since five participants came from there (from Albanian, Bosniak and Serb ethnicity). We had several discussions about the past and present painful events in Kosovo, from different angles, which contributed to a better understanding of the view of the "other side". These discussions were often emotional, so they sometimes caused individuals to withdraw because they feared things might escalate. Training team encouraged participants to take a chance and face these difficult issues in a safe space, because they were waiting for them at home, anyway. Participants used the opportunity quite well.

Most participants from Kosovo came from the southeast part of the region, from the triangle of Gnjilane - Prizren - Strpce (Serb enclave). This situation created a possibility to get in touch, firsthand, with individuals from the neighbouring community. It gave a solid basis to establish communication between those communities. We should pay attention to this kind of micro-regional gatherings of people from the neighbouring communities, in the future, even though it depends to a great extent from the applications we receive, and it is quite rare to get lots of applications from people coming from divided neighbouring communities.

As usual, the training evaluation was done during the last workshop, and later on within thorough evaluation questionnaires. The training team had a separate evaluation afterwards. Here are some of the participants' statements from both evaluation questionnaires and verbal evaluation:

What have you gained with this training?

- *I've gained lots of new information and opinions of people. I never regretted coming here, not even in those situations when it was hard. I hope some communication and cooperation will remain after the training.*
- *On the second day, I've already said it would be a great thing if you brought us here just to get to know each other.*
- *One of the important things I've gotten is a more complete insight into the situation in Kosovo and Macedonia. I've become more convinced how important this work is.*
- *It means a lot to me to get to know people from all over former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. This is certainly going to help me a lot in my future work. My priority is cooperation with Albanian community.*
- *I've become really aware of some problems. In comparison to the routine lectures at the university, this was very energising and activating. It wasn't like I've only been to Ulcinj but also to Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Cacak (Serbia) and all around.*
- *I'm one of those who have never before had a chance to meet an Albanian. I may say I've dealt with one of my prejudices. I had a chance to reexamine my attitudes. I'm interested to work in media on identification and transformation of conflicts.*
- *I've faced reality and I've gained self-esteem. I do think I'm brave, but still I got rid of some fear.*

More details about the training, the themes and the evaluation are available in the documentation titled "I call on the folks to put the music on". It is available on request from CNA, and it will soon be on our web page, too.

One of the long discussions we had after the training concerned the participation of physically disabled people. We received quite a big number of such applications. We weren't able to accept them because the hotel in Ulcinj, where we were staying couldn't provide adequate conditions for them. That is unfortunately the case with most of the hotels in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, we know of. We are aware of the fact that we may discriminate the disabled by refusing their applications for organisational reasons, but the important thing is that we are looking for a way to deal with this problem and have reached some guidelines to approach the issue.

1.2 Seven-day Training in Nonviolent Conflict Transformation Organised by Centre for Development of Civic Awareness (Centar za razvoj gradanske svesti) from Babušnica, Serbia

Zvonacka banja, March 15-22, 2002

Centre for development of civic awareness (CDCA) from Babušnica, Serbia, invited CNA to conduct a seven-day training in nonviolent conflict transformation, in Zvonacka banja, from March 15 to 22, 2002. CDCA named this training *»Friendly neighbours«*.

Population of the southeast Serbia (Piroć, Dimitrovgrad, Babušnica, Zvonce, etc.) is mostly Serb and Bulgarian. For several decades already, there have been mistrust and strong prejudices amongst them. They go way back, even before The World War II when there was a ferocious war going on between Serbs and Bulgarian in the area. Bulgarians are still blamed for the fact that Bulgaria was once the Nazi ally. Current situation is very delicate, because mistrust, prejudice and discrimination haven't been discussed, thus deepening the gap that already exists. It is symptomatic that many Bulgarians declare themselves as Serbs, or don't wish to do it at all. Many of them changed their Bulgarian surnames into Serbian ones (for example Todorov to Todorovic). One can get an idea how big this problem is in everyday life in this region, from sayings like the following: *»When was Bulgarian a human, and lev¹ money?«*. As a response to all that, it is common for people to hide their Bulgarian identity. But, there's also a different kind of response – a boy wearing a T-shirt with words: *»I'm proud! I'm Bulgarian!«* on it. These prejudices are not discussed amongst Bulgarians and Serbs who are friends, not even as a joke. People keep silent about it. They don't talk about their feeling of belonging to some ethnic group, either. An additional aspect of the whole story is a very difficult economic situation of the region, because most people haven't got even the bare essentials for their existence.

The training was organized for people from a local community, Bulgarians and Serbs. Part of the participants came from NGOs (Civil Library *»Pirgos«*, Piroć, KIC Dimitrovgrad, CDCA Babušnica, Otpor Babušnica). For other participants, it was the first encounter with the work of NGOs, and for all of them it was completely new experience to encounter our work method.

Members of training team were: Tamara Šmidling and Nedžad Horozovic from CNA Sarajevo office, Helena Rill from Belgrade office and Rozeta Aleksov from Creative Centre *»Caribrod«* from Dimitrovgrad, who had participated at CNA's *Training for Trainers Programme in 2001*. Having Rozeta in our team was of great value to us, and her contribution to our work was big, especially since she came from the community where the training took place.

Organizers of the training (CDCA) insisted on having more than 30 participants. We decided to divide participants into two groups because according to our approach, 15-20 participants is an optimal number for an interactive work. Two groups were planned to work separately. The training team also split up in two, each team made of two persons, and so we ended up with two parallel training events. Working in

¹ Bulgarian currency

such a way, on a seven-day training, demanded lot more engagement and responsibility from the trainers, as having only two people in the team is too small for seven days of intense work, especially because along with their own, each training team was following the work of the other group as well, through joint evaluation.

The following themes were worked on: nonviolent communication, teamwork, decision making, violence, prejudices, discrimination, perception, understanding of conflicts, differences, identity, national identity, power. By choosing these subjects, training team wanted to work on difficulties in communication between two groups, prejudices/stereotypes, the importance of national identity, what does it mean to people...

The training team encountered difficulty regarding the differences between motivation expressed in application forms and what was actually going on, on the training. Participants answered question about their motivation to come to the training in their applications. The training team received participants' applications few days before the training and in accordance to their motivation, the programme was created. Most of the participants wrote they were mainly interested: to work on relations and rights of majority and minority and national identity, and especially to meet the other ethnic group and make those issues the subject of discussion. However, during the training, the training team got an impression that the group, and particularly some individuals weren't motivated, lot of them were inactive, not willing to deal with certain subjects and not ready for reexamination and confrontation. It was quite different from what was written in their applications. It turned out some people never even filled their applications, but somebody else had done it for them. This proved to be a problem, especially during the workshop on »national identity«. It was clear that there was fear of opening up the subject, fear to express one's own national identity, particularly with Bulgarians. One could sense particular discomfort when the term »minority« was mentioned, because almost nobody wanted to identify themselves as any kind of »minority«. One person said he/she didn't want to talk about it in order to avoid misunderstanding. It was clear that there was a fear of discussing any kind of conflict, expressed with comments like »It's better not to touch it«.

Besides ethnic prejudices amongst participants, there were also prejudices of urban versus rural, since some participants came from bigger cities while the others were from small villages.

The training team realised how important it was to continue with work on building of the group and mutual trust, and especially on empowering people before opening up these painful issues that hadn't been opened for decades, except in a »their own« safe environments. One of the ideas we had was to try and work on affirmation of the national identity in »ethnically homogenous« groups, in order to empower people first to talk about it.

The training team found the workshop about power quite moving. Participants talked how they hadn't been aware they had any power at all (personal, social) and that they were empowered through the training.

The training team perceived this training as a very important event for the participants, which is confirmed with their statements in the evaluation questionnaires and also expressed at the evaluation of the training, during the last

segment of work. In their evaluation, trainers came up with the conclusion that it was very important to work with people from this region and give them support. Just as some participants were empowered after the training, so was the training team - empowered to keep working on peace building.

Some of the statements from evaluation questionnaires:

What is the most important experience you've gained on this training?

- Experience concerning work with people of different ethnic background.
- To listen and be listened to; to say what I mean.
- Discovery that I can express my emotions in front of people I don't know at all.
- *Differences exist. Problem exists. If we work patiently with good methods we can reach the goal.*
- *We should listen to people completely and understand them totally, and then make final judgements.*
- *Feelings of minority and problems of minority in this region.*
- *Communicate with people as much as possible, present one's problems and opinions, because one can never guess what's in other people's heads.*
- *Lot of people or events shouldn't be judged at first sight, we should hear a lot of things, listen and see, and come to a conclusion. Man should get rid of as many prejudices as he can and accept people as they are regardless of different opinions.*

What do you think you've learned on these workshops? Which of those things you've learned you can apply in your work and life?

- *I've learned that we should listen to the others before having an attitude, and that we should tolerate them no matter how different their opinions are from ours.*
- *I've learned that lot of violence would be avoided if people communicated better.*
- *To think more thoroughly and carefully, to reexamine myself and the others, not to be quiet - to have an absolute right to say how I feel, and why I feel that way.*
- *I think I'll be much more willing to accept other people's opinions.*
- *I've learned to look at things from several angles, to be responsible not just to myself and for myself, but also to other people and for them, to listen ... I think all the things we've learned are absolutely applicable.*
- *I've learned I have the power to start things up in my town, and I'm going to put an effort to make it happen.*
- *I've learned there's always another standpoint, that nothing is black and white and world would be a much better place if people tried to listen and really understand each other. And many more things, but there's no space to write any more. I've upraised my self-esteem, I've puttered about myself.*

It is very important for the training team that participants showed an interest to discuss further what they worked and experienced on the training, to hang out together, to continue to educate themselves, perhaps to become active socially. One of the trainers, Rozeta Aleksov, helps participants a lot because she's stayed in touch with them and continues to give them great support.

2. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

During the next three months (June, July and August 2002) we are going to focus on the following activities:

- Four public debates "Four Views - From the past: how I found myself in war, towards the future: how to reach sustainable peace?"
- The first three phases of *Training for Trainers Programme*, organised by CNA's Belgrade office
- *Basic training in Nonviolent Conflict transformation* organised by CNA's Sarajevo office.

2.1 "Four Views - From the past: how I found myself in war, towards the future: how to reach sustainable peace?"

Series of panel discussions named "Four Views - From the past: how I found myself in war, towards the future: how to reach sustainable peace" is going to be held in June 2002. Guests of these debates will be people who participated directly in past wars in the region of former Yugoslavia: Adnan Hasanbegovic from Sarajevo, Gordan Bodog from Zagreb, Nebojša Jovanovic and Saša Dujovic from Belgrade. Katarina Katanic, a journalist from Kragujevac is facilitating the discussions. She participated on our *Basic Training* in Ulcinj, Montenegro, in April 2002.

Since a long time already, we've wanted to work on dealing with individual responsibility for the past, more actively and more "publicly". This intention is materialised in a pilot project that will have four panel discussion, for now just in Serbia: in Indija (June 3, 2002), Niš (June 12), Novi Pazar (June 17) and Kragujevac (June 24).

The idea was to find three or four people who participated in past wars, either volunteers or those who were mobilised, people who fought on different sides, who are ready to talk in public about their perception of war, their responsibility, and the way they see future and building of sustainable peace. During each debate, there will be enough time to give the audience a chance to ask questions or to give comments and opinions.

Each debate is organised together with some local organization: Youth Culture Club (Omladinski kulturni klub) from Indija, Protecta from Niš, Urban-in from Novi Pazar and Millennium from Kragujevac. We've got the support from the local authorities in these cities. We've got in touch with media to join us and support the project. Funding was provided by The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland.

Thorough report from these debates will be included in our next report. We hope to publish a detailed evaluation of this project by then, so we'll have some directives on how to continue. One of the ideas we have is to organize these kind of public debates in Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

2.2 *Training for Trainers Programme*

CNA has organised the fourth *Training for Trainers* in nonviolent conflict transformation, which is going to start in July 2002. This programme will last for 11 months. It has been innovated after the first three programmes so it is going to include 3 more phases. We have extended the *Training for Trainers* programme,

based on thorough evaluations of the past three programmes and on evaluation of our three-year work. Judging by our experience from the previous programmes, participants were empowered and motivated to do different things in their own communities or on regional level, in cooperation with each other. Their ideas and wishes were often turned into initiatives, and even written projects. Only a few of them were actually realised. While working on elaboration and implementation of these ideas and projects, participants needed our support. We responded to their needs as much as we could, randomly, in between our regular, strategic activities. This time, we've decided to include that support into our strategic plan, by adding three new phases to the Programme and by setting the time frame in which they will take place. Therefore, this is how we've planned the new *Training for Trainers programme to look like*:

Phase I

10-day Training, July 5 - 15, 2002

The first phase is an enhancement of *The Basic Training*, where the issues that were already worked on are being deepened. Participants are divided into teams that are going to prepare workshops on the subject they are interested in. They are going to implement them in the Phase III of the programme.

Phase II

Follow-up meetings, July - August 2002

Teams of participants that have been formed already get a chance to meet and work on preparations and elaboration of the workshop with back up from the training team. These meetings are planned to take 1-2 days.

Phase III

10-day training, August 23 - September 2, 2002

In the first half of this training, teams of participants are going to conduct workshops they prepared earlier, thus having an opportunity to work and get feedback in a safe environment. In the other part of the training, issues regarding trainer's work are covered: role of a trainer, difficulties, preparation of workshops, motivation.

Phase IV

5-day training, October 25 - 30, 2002

During this new phase of the programme, participants are going to develop new ideas for concrete activities they want to pursue. Participants form small teams and work on implementation of these ideas. Together with the training team, they further elaborate these activities, define target groups and prepare strategies. Writing a project proposal is also covered.

Phase V

Follow-up meetings, November - December 2002

In the meantime, prior to this phase of the programme, teams of participants make a draft or a project proposal for the activity they want to implement. During these meetings, they get a chance to elaborate their proposals, together with the training team.

Phase VI

5-day training, December 13 - 18, 2002

Teams of participants introduce their project proposals. They get a chance to hear opinions and criticism from the other participants. We will work on development of skills for public presentation of goals and aims of the activities planned. Special

attention is given to the way we send messages to public, and values we promote. At the end, after the finalisation of project proposals, together, we choose the ones that are going to be completed, adjust it to the total budget, and make a detailed plan of their implementation.

Phase VII

Implementation of the activities planed, 2003

This phase of the programme, which should last for 5 months, includes implementation of the activities planed according to projects. Participants gathered around designed activities are going to work on their implementation, with the support of CNA team, during preparation, realisation and evaluation of their projects, as well as working on final written and financial reports. However, participants are the ones to determine what kind of support they want from CNA team, based on their own assessment.

Phase VIII

4-day training, 2003

This is the last phase of the training. During this phase, experiences gained in the previous phase are exchanged, thorough evaluation is conducted, and possible future cooperation is discussed and the need for support of the CNA team is analysed.

Implementation of the last two parts (VII and VIII) is somewhat uncertain, because we still haven't got funding to do it. The first six phases will be funded by German Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

3. APPENDIX

3.1 WHO WILL BE FIRST?!

By CNA team

When we say *sustainable* peace we think of the state of society where social justice exists, where there is no discrimination of any kind, or hate speech, and even if they exist, they are not generally accepted by the society. We are talking about the state of society where every individual has a feeling of belonging, acceptance and security and has a right to their own identity. There is no such peace in this region. We cannot expect anyone from outside to "bring" it to us, or to expect ruling structures to "impose" it. It should be built from *underneath*, by citizens who are aware of their responsibility for the society they live in and who have chosen to take action against injustice and discrimination, together with authorities and institutions.

One of the big obstacles in building sustainable peace in the societies of former Yugoslavia is the overall *victimisation* of these societies. The victimisation is multiple and it exists on three different levels: people feel like victims of "the others" whom they were once in war against, (the others are often blamed not only for the war, but for all the consequences of the war, too: difficult economic situation, many refugees and displaced persons, ruined economy, increased crime and violence rates,

etc.). Then, there is the feeling of being a victim, of helplessness and dependence on "one's own" politicians (one can often hear the following "What can we do about it, we know who's deciding our fate") and also on world powers ("We are just guinea pigs in their experiments"). Role of the victim is one of the *most comfortable ones*, because it frees us from any kind of responsibility whatsoever: for our own destiny (because all of the levels stated above affect us), but also for the society we live in, too (because "we know who's deciding our fate"). It is clear there will be no substantial change in this region as long as we stay buried in the role of the victim.

Opening the discussion about responsibility for the war and all the things that were happening to us and all around us, initiates the resistance towards dealing with responsibility. Even when there is an awareness that we all share responsibility, a question comes up: *Why must we start first* with the process of reexamination of responsibility for the past? "we Serbs" or "we Croats" or "we Bosniaks"... Having this kind of attitude means that we should be ashamed if we "started first" with this process, instead that we should be proud of it (although it's difficult to determine who started first, because different groups and individuals have been working on it in this region, for quite some time already). By dealing with our own responsibility for the past, we offer a hand and make space for the way to reconciliation, thus supporting the others to start that process, too.

It is obvious that social values are distorted because going to war in the name of one's own nation is estimated as a *patriotic act*, while on the other hand, anti-war actions are by no means associated with patriotism.

If there's awareness that "our side" or "someone in our name" committed war crimes, they are easily justified by saying: "But the others did it, too". We find it very important for peace building process to deal with war crimes committed "in our name". Yes, *the others* committed them, too, but that's not an excuse. Let's see first what's in our own backyard, and then criticise the neighbour's.

Giving people a chance to hear what it is like for the *others*, Croats, Bosniaks, Albanians, Serbs, *them*, what their problems are, their fears and hopes, is a very important step towards mutual understanding, and thereby towards peace building. These stories are often very much alike, mostly hard and simply human. They inevitably initiate compassion and feelings of solidarity, de-mystification and humanisation of *the enemy*. It also causes people to loose their prejudice that *they are all the same, chetniks, ustasa, balia*.

How does, for example, an Albanian feel in Belgrade, where prejudices against this ethnic group are very strong and one can often hear *they are "savages", "dirty", "they breed (like rabbits)"*, and their ultimate goal is The Great Albania? How do Croats and Serbs feel in Sarajevo, if they are almost exclusively hired by a few Croats or Serbs who run their own businesses? How do a few Serbs or Gorani feel like in Priština, when they cannot speak their own language on the street, for the security reasons? How do Bosniaks in Banja Luka feel when they're not allowed to rebuild The Ferhadija Mosque, which was destroyed with mines during the war? They all certainly share one feeling: lack of security, freedom to express their own identity and prospects, something every human needs.

Within such framework, it is very important to have public debates on identities, especially national identities. What does it mean for a person to be a Serb, Bosniak, Albanian or Croat? What values does this bring along? What prejudices and fears?

We did *live together* once, or we lived next to each other, but we didn't really know each other. We were smothered with the idea of "brotherhood and unity". According to it, we were all the same and expressing one's ethnic or religious identity was either suppressed or *sign of bad taste*. Not knowing or quasi-knowing each other was

something that created a fertile soil for the growth of many prejudices of one against the other.

People who have the need to express and live their ethnic identity are often stamped as nationalists. The missing element, in our opinion, is an affirmation of ethnic identities through values that they bring along, values that are not based either on the *battles we once won* or on those things in which *others are worse than we are*. These values are based on *the wealth of cultures* - which does not endanger or depreciate anyone. This is something we need to work on.

The different and the unknown are mostly perceived as a threat. It is followed by distancing, instead of getting to know the unknown, communicating and creating security through mutual cooperation and trust. "Country's own" army is often publicly presented as the security guarantee, while the neighbouring countries perceive it as a threat and they respond with further armament. Spending funds from small national budget for the army, weakens the country's economy, provokes social discontent, increases violence, and creates a fertile soil for extremism, thus increasing chances for the abuse of the army. The circle is closed. It's a paradox that after all these wars, militarism is perceived as the way to provide security. Still, there's a lack of alternatives to this widely accepted pattern. There is no magic formula, but the alternative way certainly is communication and cooperation with the closest neighbours, which must be preceded with mutual trust building.

In our opinion, important steps in the process of building of sustainable peace include sensitising people for violence and condemning violence by society. By this, we mean that there is an awareness that violence is not just physical and direct as hitting somebody or throwing a bomb at a confectionery owned by an Albanian in a mostly Serb populated village in Vojvodina. Threat of violence is also violence, as well as discrimination, insult or disdain. Violence is when they correct your ekavica dialect to ijekavica dialect, in a bakery in Sarajevo; or when an Albanian woman refuses to sell her tomatoes to a Macedonian woman, at the market in Skopje. Violence is also when we feel unsafe in towns and villages we live in.

In the very moment when all of us start to condemn violence, regardless of who the victim is and why, regardless of who committed it and what their motive was, in that moment we can say we're on the way of building a sustainable peace and that we did our best to prevent any future war in this region.

3.2 "What can I do?" - Well, I can! (some reflections on violence and nonviolence)

By Helena Rill

What else can one say about violence that is present everywhere around us, what has not been said already? Really - not much, but I sometimes feel it painfully, and I need to say that I want to fight against violence. What I'm writing here is perhaps just one of many ways possible. One of many? I sometimes wonder - are there enough of them? Are there enough people who fight against violence?

I've had a chance to hear many reflections on violence and nonviolence, lately. While talking to other people I've opened some new windows to look at this subject. Lot of

new questions I'm dealing with, have come out. All of this has been initiated by violence that I keep discovering from different angles, over and over again. Concrete act of violence I've recently heard of and my awareness of violence I've experienced, as well as the one I've committed or supported, initiated me to revolve about this subject and share it with others.

I'd like to start from the beginning - what is violence, anyway? According to Johan Galtung "Violence is a negative influence on basic human needs (or life) that can be avoided, which restricts a potential possibility for fulfilment of those needs. Violent threat is also violence".

Looking at these words makes me think about all that violence! But these words matter even more when I have a chance to experience violence firsthand or to see someone else experiences it; on one hand these words become tainted with pain, fear, hurt, anger, weakness, but on the other hand I become even more determined to respond to it. It happens frequently that only physical violence is perceived as such, although I often experience violence firsthand as a very perfidious one and not at all physical or direct. I may also call it social injustice, which is often justified and commented with the following words "well, what can I do?". Well, I can!

Sometimes violence I see all around makes me stunned and I don't know how to react. At times I'm scared and I feel so small. There isn't a recipe how to react to violence. There's just something inside of me that moves me to see a possible solutions that might not always be adequate ... Still, I don't want just to watch and say »what can I do?«. I hear sometimes people say that violence is part of human nature. Many famous people talked and wrote about it. I must admit that it makes me a bit afraid because it means accepting the state of violence and the excuse "what can I do about it". Discrimination, which I unfortunately can see all around me, is often justified as natural phenomena enrooted in humans.

What about the violence that I commit? I happen to react to something and later hear people perceived it as great violence. Sometimes, I'm aware of it and sometimes I'm not. Ha! Well, I also commit violence, or I'm the part of the system that does it. Where is my responsibility for the violence committed? Or for the one I supported? Or for the violence I turned away from?

It's important to me that people hear what I perceive as violence as well as that I hear them; it's important to reexamine both myself and the society I live in. Sensitising for violence, for me, is very high up as one of the first steps in fighting against violence, as one little, but at the same time big step of the process towards nonviolence. Actually, for me nonviolence is one big process.

Nonviolence? How much do I (we) know about it? It is interesting that one cannot hear much about it, or is it just my impression? For some people nonviolence is silence, suffering, "turning the other cheek", love, passivity. Some time ago I reacted to something I experienced as violence and my voice gave away hurt and anger. Some people responded with the following: "I thought you were nonviolent" and "that is nonviolence for you?!". Yes, that is nonviolence, for me. Nonviolence is when I don't suffer, when I speak up about what is hurting me, not endangering others of course, when I approach violence in an active way, when I think about it, fight against it, deal with conflicts in an open way, when I live nonviolence.

Am I nonviolent? Well, I have difficulties with it. If I say that I am or that someone else is nonviolent, I put a label onto myself (or the others) as if it's something irreversible, which I can't agree on. Even the act of labelling is violence. No, I'm not nonviolent. I sometimes react violently, sometimes I don't react at all to violence, which is also violence when I don't react to it and watch passively, instead. This way I accept it, too.

For me, nonviolence is having persistence in reflection of both myself and society and persistence to change it. I believe there's a spark in every one of us. I want to live in a society where there is a culture of nonviolence, but I also must work on it. Nothing will fall into my (our) lap.

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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