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CENTAR ZA NENASILNU AKCIJU
CENTRE FOR NONVIOLENT ACTION

SIX-MONTH REPORT

MARCH - MAY 2006

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

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. TRAININGS.....	4
Training in Peace Building	4
Report from the Training «Dealing With the Past» for the Youth of Eastern Bosnia	5
3. BOOKS	6
The Work on the Publication «Reflections and Experiences in the Field of Peace Building, Ten Years After the War»	6
4. OTHER ACTIVITIES; ACTIVITIES OF OUR PARTNERS.....	6
Seminar: The Others - From Patriarchal Construction to Alternative Policy	6
Training in Bielefeld, Germany	7
Establishing the Truth in the Post-Conflict Period: Initiatives and Perspectives in the West Balkans.....	8
5. ARTICLES - PERSONAL VIEWS	9
Peace Caravan 2006	9

1. INTRODUCTION

Dear friends,

In front of you is a three-month report of CNA Belgrade and Sarajevo offices for period March to May 2006. We worked a lot during these three months and most of it was related to dealing with the past: the basic training in peace building with a somewhat changed concept and stronger emphasis on violence and social processes in the context of peace building and dealing with the war past, workshops with the youth of Srebrenica and Bratunac (Bosnia and Herzegovina), also on the theme of dealing with the past; the process of collecting articles for our publication titled "Reflections and Experiences in the Field of Peace Building" is well under way. In the past few months, we've had a lot of contacts with people who are either working in the field of peace building or are interested in it, from both our region and abroad, like for example people from Georgia and Abkhazia who paid us a one-day visit and gave us some insights about contexts of work in that region; we were in Germany where we exchanged experiences with other activists and we also talked with Brian Philips and the students from the Oxford University.

At this moment, this entire region is burdened with political turmoil: the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro does not exist any more - these two states are now separate and "independent", as it is often underlined. Parliamentary elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina are approaching with the use of nationalistic rhetoric, while Croatia is moving its priority closer to European integrations, with less and less interest for this region and political cooperation within its borders. Negotiations on Kosovo remain to be on the agenda, but it seems that the talks still primarily revolve on the interests, and far less on the needs.

Sincerely,
CNA team

2. TRAININGS

Training in Peace Building

Tivat, Montenegro, April 7 - 17, 2006

The 24th basic training in peace building, organized by CNA was held in the «Palma» hotel, in Tivat, Montenegro. There were 20 people in the group, coming from Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. Amongst them were activists of political parties, nongovernmental organizations and veterans' associations and people who work in media.

More than 140 persons applied for the training, and 20 of them participated, 10 female and 10 male.

We worked on the themes like: communication, teamwork, decision making, understanding the conflict, violence, national identity, gender, prejudices, discrimination, dealing with the past and nonviolent action.

From the very beginning the group was especially motivated for work and there was a willingness to learn through experience and exchange which enabled thorough coverage of the themes and resulted in many intensive discussions and the exchange of different views and dilemmas.

In the first part of the training, one could notice a certain feeling of fear when the themes related to war, violence and nationalism were treated. It was probably due to the presence of persons who had directly experienced the war during the nineties. As early as the introductory workshop, while the group was being built and people were presenting themselves, very complex personal stories and experiences were brought up. It made the training gain in seriousness but also influenced the group atmosphere, resulting in fear from confrontation and mutual criticism. However, in the course of the training this changed to the great degree, so in later stage of the training we had very thorough and constructive discussions about the war and attitude towards the past.

At this training, for the first time we've set up the concept of the training with the themes like peace building and dealing with the past and it turned out very well. Such set up enabled more comprehensive view on social problems concerning dealing with the past and peace building. Covering the theme of dealing with the past as one unit created space for a more direct discussion about ways to deal with the painful past and encouraged talks about the relations between peace building and violence caused by war and its consequences. With respect to that, some dilemmas were brought up about the reasons for denial and justification of violence committed in the war and possible ways to overcome conflicts that had its origin in the war.

There were also a lot of talks about the relations between minority and majority and cases of discrimination based on ethnicity, sex, gender etc. that frequently happen in our communities. One could notice a lack of sensitization for some of these issues, like



discrimination of sexual minorities for example, but people from the group confronted it palpably, which was an important aspect of the training.

With all the group's diversity with respect to participants' age, ethnicity, gender and experience, there wasn't any serious divide or polarisation amongst them, except that the men were far more active during the work process than the women. Difficulties we encountered were related to extended duration of the workshops due to lot of exercises we had planned per each workshop, as well as because of trainees' were actively participating in discussions,

and in some cases, coming late or leaving the training before the end. Finally, we have a feeling of a training well done, with a group which was highly motivated for work on peace building and carrying a lot of potential for mutual cooperation. During the evaluation most participants gave very creditable comments on the training, noting that it was a very important incentive in both experiential and emotional sense. The documentation of this training entitled "Markovi konaci" (99. p) is available on our web site (www.nenasilje.org).

Report from the Training «Dealing With the Past» for the Youth of Eastern Bosnia

Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina, March 17 - 20, 2006

Milići, Bosnia and Herzegovina, March 24 - 27, 2006

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

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

The original idea was to work parallel and continually with two different groups of trainees which would pass the educational programme in three phases (consisting of three different training events) on the following themes: dealing with the past, personal and collective responsibility and peace building. The programme is planned to last continuously for most of 2006, and two training events that have been held so far, were used as an introduction to the theme and a source of basic sensitization for the issues of violence, peace building and dealing with the past.

The main expectation from this series of training events, besides achieving a satisfactory level of sensitization and awareness about what is dealing with the past and why it is important to work on it, is to encourage participants to take more concrete steps in this field, thus shifting from potential "supporters" of this processes to their active carriers. The goal represents a great challenge due to numerous aggravating circumstances that people who work on dealing with the past encounter on daily basis - the difficulty discourages young people from working in this field, while they are even more seriously discouraged by the attitude of their communities towards these matters that often show readiness to practise all kinds of pressure and violence against people who dare to disturb the rigid relations and attitudes towards everything that was really happening during the 1992-95 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Life of young people (as well as others) in the municipalities of Srebrenica and Bratunac brings along rarely expressed, but ever so present patterns of relations with the "others" that are manifested through mutual ignoring, non-communication and avoidance which is enrooted in mutual experience of oneself as victim of the others. Many of those "quiet" conversations that happen within families and communities about "those" (others) strongly influence these relations thus supporting the prejudices, separation, intolerance and hatred and producing a strong resistance against any kind of conversations about the past and the responsibility of individuals and collectives for the events that had happened during the war. On the other hand, one can notice that young people need to talk about the past and especially about the events that took place in this area because they have a strong feeling that it influences and marks their lives even though they don't see their own responsibility for it. The desire to change the situation and willingness to discuss it within the groups where "the others" are also present (which was the case with these two groups of youngsters) gives the feeling that the situation may be changed at least a little bit. The fear of confrontation with one's own community is obvious and so is the need for support from both "one's own" and the "others" whenever the discussion means stepping out of the habitual milieu of the existing relations. Even though there was some kind of heavy feeling present during the workshops it was encouraging to see the process of realisation that there was neither some other way nor a choice, except cooperation and dealing with the past.

When the entire programme is completed we shall see whether the aim to include young people more actively in these problems is achieved or not, but the sole fact that the implementation of these training events included not just NDC-a (in the role of the organizers) and CNA (as the trainers' support) but also few other youth organizations from this region (with Odisej from Bratunac, as their most prominent representative) confirms that there's hope. Hope for more intensive and visible work, and for mutual cooperation of different organizations that was often praised declaratively, but poorly implemented in practice.

3. BOOKS

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

In February, we started implementing quite an old idea of ours about the publication that would collect different activist and exploratory experiences in the field of peace building from the region of former Yugoslavia.

The idea evolved from several »sources«: to begin with the obvious fact that an enormous experience of work in the field of peace building was accumulated within both CNA and numerous other organizations and informal groups throughout the region. It's also the fact that in many cases, this immense knowledge and experience are stored in some informal «archives» and that it is often passed on and shared by means of oral tradition - ever so popular and deeply enrooted in our part of the world. If we add to this that we're facing the chronic lack of awareness that it is important for **local** activists to *reflect in writing on the context in which they both work and live*, therefore *exchanging* their insights and *debating* them, we got a very good motivational basis for undertaking a project like this.

We should add that many of our colleagues from the region of former Yugoslavia supported this intention, therefore at this moment the articles that will make the skeleton of this book are being made.

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

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

The book is planned to be published at the beginning of next year.

4. OTHER ACTIVITIES; ACTIVITIES OF OUR PARTNERS

Seminar: The Others - From Patriarchal Construction to Alternative Policy *Banja Vrujci, Serbia, April 14-18, 2006*

Centre for Promotion of Culture of Nonviolence and Equal Rights - Queeria, in cooperation with Women in Black organized a four-day seminar for activists of Serbian nongovernmental organizations and political parties. Seminar thematized the following themes: identities, violence, militarism, homophobia and alternative policy, aiming to contribute to change of

value systems and disintegration of militarism and patriarchal constructions. Additional goals of the organizers were bringing together people who work in different local communities in Serbia and building capacities for potential cooperation.

It was interesting to see that the group of participants (mainly from NGO-s, since no one from any political party neither applied nor showed up) were more sensitized for the themes of the seminar than it had been the case with other seminars/training events, therefore it wasn't necessary to work on basic sensitization of participants. This certainly isn't the result of the changes that have happened in the society, but has more to do with the role that the LGBT organization played in organization of this seminar. In other words, we didn't encounter any manifestation of homophobia, and one supposes that people who carry a certain amount of homophobia were not interested to attend the seminar of this type, especially not one organized by LGBT.

During the evaluation, trainees indicated that they were especially satisfied with the workshop on the theme of homophobia, and with the work on deconstruction of the image of enemy, which was part of the workshop that had covered militarism. Several of them said they missed covering the theme «nonviolence».

The training team included: Boban Stojanović, Ksenija Forca and Predrag Azdejković of Queeria, and Ivana Franović from CNA, as the guest trainer.

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

Training in Bielefeld, Germany

April 20 - 30, 2006

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

Basic idea of the training was to gather in one place people who are engaged in peace education, working with different kind of groups, using different approaches, and to make use of the meeting for an exchange of methods, approaches and values that guide us in our work. One may think that when the group is made of 18 very experienced activists, the group process will go smoothly and the desired priorities will be established easily. This time, however, it was not the case and this gathering gave us a chance to practice our own constructive communication skills, decision making and dealing with group dynamics which was really tiring at times. A certain ambiguity with respect to the nature of this meeting and sometimes clumsy drifting between an attempt to make this event a space for exchange and support and a set-up that resembled quite a lot to some decision making exercise as a part of the early phase of the training for trainers program, made us very tired and took away lot of valuable time. Anyway, there was time to get insights into the variety of social contexts and different strategies that we choose in our work, accordingly.

Group's diversity and variety of focal points helped opening up a truly wide space with plenty of possibilities for an individual to find basis for both reflexion and self-reflexion, to thematize issues that concern people and to get plenty of energy and inspiration to hang in. Every one of the peace organizations that were attending the meeting had a chance to present and demonstrate their own approach, on the theme chosen by people who were in the team. The themes covered a wide range of issues, and it was especially interesting to see how seemingly same or similar methods, approaches or tools can be used in so many different ways, that basically depends on the value credo or the basis one starts from.

Baring that in mind, it is logical that those who perceive themselves as full-time employed professionals working for an agency that provides training services to clients will have a

different value basis than the peace activists, working for a non-hierarchically organized peace group; as well as those who act in a so called «settled and organized» societies like Germany, will face a completely different kind of challenges from those who work in post-conflict societies like Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Turkey, torn apart by different types of open, direct violence.

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

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

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

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

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

Ivo Miro Jović, Croatian Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency member addressed the conference at the opening, expressing his doubts regarding the righteousness of work of the Hague Tribunal and promoted a specific «aspiration towards the truth» that encompassed exclusively the suffering of the Croatian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, leaving the conference immediately afterwards. Even though his statement was both surprising and highly inappropriate, it also depicted how hard and painful was to walk the path towards setting up an ambiance in which war atrocities would be accepted without petty political distortion and interpretation hence we could draw the lessons for the present and the future out of all that had happened, so it never happened again.

The following themes were discussed at the conference: work of the Hague Tribunal, work of the special division of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina for war crimes, necessity of regional approach to work on dealing with the past, present situation of the victims and associations of families of the victims and missing persons. The theme that the participants also found very interesting was adoption of the law for establishing the Truth Commission by the Bosnia and Herzegovina Parliamentary Assembly. The draft law was being prepared by the representatives of BiH biggest political parties that had been delegated by the parties themselves according to their own criteria. The initiative to establish the Commission according to such principle was proposed by the United States Institute of Peace. Without getting any further into the question whether the society of Bosnia and Herzegovina need such a commission or not or judging its work even before it was formed, the impression remains that the incentive to form the commission came from outside. Unfortunately, it wasn't because the society identified the need to recognize, declare and set to their place the facts of war (and not just those concerning the war crimes, but also about the mechanisms and circumstances that had led to it) thus making the mosaic that might be

called the «truth». Aspirations to establish the truth often come as a result of either the need to «prove» one's own truth or to «deny» other's, without any intention to search for it together or tendency to establish a constructive dialogue about the past. One can often hear these kinds of statements from the politicians (and they become even more explicit right before the elections) and they are the ones who should be leading the process, as it is suggested with this concept of the establishing of the commission.

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

5. ARTICLES - PERSONAL VIEWS

Peace Caravan 2006

'Objection for Peace', Regional Network for Conscientious Objection organized a regional peace caravan, under the slogan 'Peace is not just an absence of war', this year for the second time. Caravan was organized on the occasion of May 15, which had been accepted as the International Conscientious Objectors Day since the eighties. This year, caravan visited 10 cities in five countries of the Balkan region: Skopje (Macedonia), Priština (Kosovo), Leskovac, Belgrade, Novi Sad (all in Serbia), Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Šibenik and Zagreb (Croatia). About fifty young people coming from all parts of the region of former Yugoslavia travelled with the caravan, together with activists and artists from Mexico, Colombia, Spain, Austria ... The basic intention behind the Caravan was to motivate people to ask themselves the following questions: What does peace mean for me? Can we say that we live in peace just because there are no active wars in this area? What are all the things that peace means? And, what kind of peace is it in this region burdened with nationalism and hate towards «others and different», with such level of social and sexual inequity and such violence rate, that we have in all the countries of the Balkan region? That's why the Caravan's main message was: "Peace is not just an absence of war. Peace means much more than that".

Activities of the Caravan included: Food Not Bombs (groups from Balkan countries were cooking and distributing food in the streets); jugglers (who were having street performances); DJ workshops; screening films with activist message; slam poetry; do-it-yourself workshops (making T-shirts in the streets, making jugglers' frills...); graffiti and evening parties or concerts.

Now, when the Caravan has ended I can say without hesitation, that this year was quite good. All the participants I had a chance to talk to shared the same impression that this year a significant step forward was made in both organizational and artistic sense. Last year's teams had been well coordinated already, and this year participants took over responsibility and coordination for some activities. People are highly motivated to take part in the next Caravan (most of this year's participants would join the Caravan again).

It's only that we are all bothered by the incident that happened with the Caravan in Priština. That is, this year the Caravan visited Kosovo, for the first time. On May 4, there were scheduled activities in Priština. Caravan's local host was Urban FM, organization based in Priština. Local organization and local activists were great and they welcomed us tremendously. The activities of the Caravan were taking place in the city centre, and plenty of people showed up. The first stereotype about Kosovo - that you mustn't speak Serbian in the street, was proved wrong by local people who came to us wishing to talk with some of the activists of the Caravan. The interaction amongst people developed and the attendance was excellent. At one point, late in the afternoon, Darko Ljubić, activist who was a part of the 'Food Not Bombs' group, and in charge of film screenings, separated from the rest of the group to start the screening. Unfortunately, someone attacked him from behind with the knife, stabbing him four times (three

times in the back and once in his hand). Darko did not remember the actual attack nor could he identify the perpetrator. Luckily, he remained conscious and managed to go back to the rest of the group, so he was taken to hospital. Injuries were treated in the hospital and he decided to continue the journey with the Caravan, the next day.

At first, many people from the region reacted like: 'It's crazy over there, what else were you expecting?' or 'You shouldn't have gone there in the first place, they are all armed'. But, that's not true. Except for the attack, people from the Caravan share great impressions. Even after the attack on Darko, activists decided to spend the night in Priština, some of them sleeping in local people's houses and some in the hostel. That speaks enough whether the activists felt safe or not. Darko received good treatment in the Priština Hospital, as he probably would anywhere else in the region.

Following the coverage of the Caravan's visit to Priština, by the media from the region, I could only notice they were reporting about the attack. There was not a word about how well it all went in Priština, neither about all the activities implemented nor about good cooperation between young people of different nationalities. That is very different from media coverage of the event in Skoplje, for example.

Kosovo probably isn't the safest area in the Balkans, but it is far from the situation some people tried to convince me of (most of them have never even been in Kosovo, ever). Still the very fact that local activists are willing to cooperate is good enough motive to work 'there' and with 'them'.

Since I was one of the organizers of the event and one of the 'coordinators' in Priština, I'm haunted by the question if all this could have been avoided and how? The fact remains that the Priština police department was absolutely useless. They neither made an accurate security assessment nor did they try to secure the area where the event was taking place, in any way. They weren't even present! They showed up only 20 minutes after the attack! Even in Skoplje there were always several policemen pottering about, not near the stands of course, but somewhere nearby. And, we were in the downtown area, in a completely relaxed atmosphere with all the tradition of safe street actions that both this town and we as the organizers have. I just can't get it into my head how Priština police department made their estimations?

On the other hand, we talked about safety in Priština while we were preparing the Caravan and we all agreed that we should rely on our local partners' estimation (they claimed that there wasn't any danger – we insisted on this matter to the point of pestering them) and that the option of Caravan being done under the heavy security measures of UNMIK or some other security forces was simply unacceptable. That was neither the message we wanted to send from Priština, nor did we want to boost the existing prejudices in the region concerning the actual situation in Priština. Perhaps, there was a chance to secure the activity in a different way ... At this moment, I really don't know. Although, my impression remains that the incident like this or a similar one could happen in any other town in the region.

The event also showed all the weak points of the media from the region, and brought to light the prejudices people have against Kosovars. However, the most important thing is that Darko Ljubić is feeling well, his wounds have healed by now. It is also great that the Caravan has established partnership with activists from Kosovo.

As far as I'm concerned – see you next year in Priština, on the Caravan!

Boro Kitanoski
Peace Action
Macedonia

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

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

All training participants
All members of Group React!
Amar - NDC Sarajevo
Amer Delic
Ana Bitoljanu
Ana Humljan Colic
Anita Grabner
Association "Veterans for peace"
Atana Grbic Martinovic
Berghof Stiftung & Berghof Research Institute
Boban Stojanović
Boro Kitanoski
Dejan Ilic
Goran Bozicevic
Goran Bubalo
IFA - Auswaertiges Amt
Jadranka Milicevic

Katarina Milicevic
KURVE Wustrow
Majda Puaca
Marko Martinic
Mennonite Central Committee
Milos Markovic
Nermin Karacic
Nexhat Ismaili
Nina Vukosavljevic
Novica Kostic
Predrag Azdejkovic
Queeria
RTS
Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs
TV K9
UMBRUCH; Christian and Jan

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