

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, the 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, whose communication has been interrupted through war and supporting the process of prejudice reduction and trust building.

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

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dear friends, another period full of different activities has passed.

During a previous three months, together with our colleagues from Belgrade office, we completed two basic training events in nonviolent conflict transformation (in Ulcinj, Montenegro and in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina). Since they were held in a short period of time, it took a lot of energy and effort to keep everything on a satisfying level. However, the energy we gained while we were working on those training can not be measured with anything else. Our project named «Dealing With Past» began in June. Preparations for public debates which are part of this project gave us hope that another area of peace building is opening. It certainly is something that requires a lot work and CNA can contribute to it. We think that it is really necessary to start discussions about the past wars, not intending to search for some universal and comprehensive truth, but aiming to understand the pain and the fear of people from the "other" side.

Except for those basic activities, we spent a lot of our effort, time and precious energy to do something that is supposed to be quite simple: have our car registered. During some forty visits to different institutions, we experienced all the power of structural violence and got a chance to test ourselves for how successful we were dealing with this type of difficulty. At last, after two months of continuous obtaining and certifying different papers, the car was registered, but the need to react to this kind of treatment has remained. Short article at the end of this report may give you a picture of what we are facing here sometimes.

Recent days and weeks have brought some changes of political and social situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Former High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Wolfgang Petrich has finished his term by imposing Constitutional Amendments and regulations in order to establish equality of all three constitutional nations (Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks) in the whole territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We will see whether this declared goal will be achieved or will it just become a way to legalize present structure of population in both entities which has existed ever since the war ended (as the result of emigration and deportation of population). However, we find the way things changed indicative. Nonparticipation of the representatives of national parties of all three nations: SDS, HDZ and SDA in talks with High Representative, that preceded those decisions, and imposing a ready-made solution do not indicate that international community representatives trust local political structures that should be responsible for the implementation of those changes.

Another political event is important for work on peace building in this region, primarily on a symbolic level. It is so called Belgrade Agreement, signed by state officials of Serbia and Montenegro, according to which Yugoslavia became just another historical concept and the symbol that made a mark in lives of millions of people. While we're waiting for parliaments of Serbia and Montenegro to ratify the agreement, it's becoming quite obvious that the use of the term "Yugoslavia" has become a political statement. The attitude towards this term reveals a whole spectrum of value and ideological systems. Anyway, people who consider themselves Yugoslavs now more than before have a chance to become "strangers" in their own homeland, where they were born and live.

We believe that plenty of people who care about establishing communication links between two neighboring countries - Croatia and Yugoslavia were pleased, just as

much as we were, with the introduction of formal tourist visas, to be received at the border, for the citizens of Croatia who travel to Yugoslavia. Croatian Government has announced further steps toward the same direction, which gives us hope that similar tendencies will prevail in the whole region. However, all of us bear responsibility for something like that to happen.

2. MAIN ACTIVITIES

2.1. Basic Training in Nonviolent Conflict Transformation

Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Maj 17th - 27th , 2002.

CNA Sarajevo organized and implemented a ten-day training in Nonviolent Conflict Transformation in The «Bistrica» Hotel, in Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Training team included: Helena Rill, Nedžad Horozović, Nenad Vukosavljević and Tamara Smidling.

There were 18 participants in the group, coming from different parts of former Yugoslavia - Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Unfortunately once again we were unable to gather a group of 20 people. It's sad but it seems to become a rule that some people simply don't show up on the training without any notice beforehand. This way, few places remain empty even though there is a huge interest for the training (this time, we received 135 applications). Due to an unusually high number of cancellations from those who were invited (which is why the waiting list was completely cleared), there was an unbalance between the number of women and men in the group (11:7). That caused some difficulty. Another characteristic of the training was the fact that there was only one Albanian participants, from Kosovo, due to a very few application we received.

Many participants were political activists (Party of Democratic Action - SDA, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Social democratic Party of Macedonia, League of Social-Democrats of Vojvodina), people from media (Macedonian «Dnevnik», Bosnian magazine «Alem») and from different NGOs. It seems that the trend that has started on our previous training in Ulcinj continues and that we managed to balance participation of our main target groups. Having people from different backgrounds, with different "stories" created an atmosphere of critical reexamination of both the things they had brought along and those things that were the subject of discussion in workshops.

The training team perceives the training as a very important experience for most of the participants, because for some of them it was the first encounter with people from almost all parts of former common country and also the first chance to exchange mutual experiences. At times, it was quite painful, but at the same time it opened some space for trust building and the beginning of the process of understanding the needs and fears of the "others".

Key issues and those that marked a ten-day work were: nonviolent communication, violence and understanding of conflicts. Besides those, other themes were worked on: team work and decision making, differences, identity and national identity, gender roles, creative conflict transformation, power and nonviolent action. Having in mind the experience from our two previous basic training events, team has set up a flexible concept, with only a few workshops prepared in advance. The training team tried to respond to all the issues and circumstances in work process by listening to the needs of the group and pursuing the questions that remained uncovered. Sense

of understanding, trust and support within the training team, and from the group, influenced the overall atmosphere in a creative way in which some new workshops and several exercises were set up. According to the statements in evaluation questionnaires, workshop on national identity was especially important for almost the entire group, because it opened up many painful issues (experience of imposition of identity from environment, disability to express one's own identity in accordance to one's feelings, high level of exposure to violence due to a certain identity, etc.). Many fears and problems were identified as common ones, regardless of various national identities of participants. Here are some of the participant's statements from the discussion on national identity:

- I can't remember that it has ever enriched my life, it only brought me problems. It was the same during the war, alleged affiliation to one side could only put your life in danger, not get you any privileges.
- It's difficult when a person from Croatia won't even listen to me, just tells me: "Do you now what your people did to my people?" It would help me if all those who stand for nationalism asked themselves for a moment, what it meant.
- I'm glad no one forced my national identity on me. It brought me wealth that came out of tradition.

Some of the turning points of the training happened while we were working on the issue of violence. Some people experienced heavy emotional reactions after speaking of their own committed acts of violence in the past. Being aware of how important it is for peace building and understanding of types and sources of violence, to start from one's own experience in committing or supporting violence within society, helped all of us to deal with emotionally difficult situations. Even though there were moments like those, the important thing is that participants were willing to open up the process of looking for possibilities for concrete action in conflict situations or situations with considerable presence of structural violence. The leitmotifs of that training were the following questions: what are the ways of nonviolent action and what exactly does it mean to them as individuals? Awareness that, after all, many things can be achieved, had a strong empowering influence of participants and their understanding that it is necessary that they take responsibility for the society they live in. Different opinions were expressed in the discussion about understanding of nonviolent action:

- For me, nonviolent action means not to reciprocate by aggression to the aggression of others and to try to transform their aggression. Speak from inside of you and your own feelings.
- To me, it means to have space and security to say and come out without denying the others to do the same, it means not closing doors.
- To me, it means to try to understand both myself and others, and work against injustice. While acting for freedom and justice not jeopardizing others. It's not at all looking passively but working actively and being open for constant reexamination of it.

At the end in their evaluation, the training team expressed their deep satisfaction with a ten-day work, trust that existed within the group and the team and with space that has opened up for future cooperation with participants, either through Training for Trainers Program (there was a lot of potential in the group for it) or through other forms of cooperation and mutual support in the future.

In the appendix you can read the impressions of some training participants.

3. OTHER ACTIVITIES

3.1. SHL Workshops For Highschool Students

SHL (Shuler Helfen Leben) initiated and organised a two-day workshop in SHL House in Sarajevo, from March 8-10, 2002. The workshop was conducted by CNA team members Nedžad Horozović and Adnan Hasanbegović. Participants were high school students from several towns of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bijeljina, Visegrad, Gorazde, Glamoc). This workshop was a part of the series of seminars, organised by SHL, aiming to educate high school students and engage them in work on civil initiatives. Participants have been already engaged in their schools, in some groups dealing with civil activities within the community.

The Concept of the seminar included interactive day-long workshops in non-violent communication, teamwork, decision making, and understanding of conflicts aiming for participants to adopt communication skills, empower them and build a group.

The most of the participants were highly motivated and willing to work in the group and on themselves. Considering their age and the time pressure of just two days, participants were very good in adopting new skills and understanding of subjects.

High motivation of participants indicates that more work should be done with this group and this segment of population in general on development of their capacity for social activity.

Most of them have already been active in some projects in their schools, which shows potential for their first-hand engagement on development of civil society, especially having in mind their awareness of the social situation in their communities as well as their dissatisfaction with it and the need to work for change.

3.2. Workshops on Relation Between National And Gender Identity

In February and March, series of workshops dealing with relation between national and gender identity were implemented in Belgrade. CNA Sarajevo team member Tamara Smidling together with Danica Minic from Belgrade conducted a weekend-workshop on the following themes: differences, prejudices and gender roles within society.

It was a quite heterogeneous group, made of 12 participants with different interests and ideas about the work in the group.

Basic idea of the whole series was to try to disclose and analyse the way identity was formed in Yugoslav society during the last decade, and also to analyse the points in which gender and national identity were interlaced. Handful of different material was collected: video tapes, articles and newspaper ads, photographs, billboard photos, etc. that in a specific way revealed models that were being imposed in socialization process, ever since early childhood.

Participants seemed to be very motivated to work on these issues, but also to plan some future work strategies in this area. In the process of participation in workshops and exchange of experience some new ideas were created: how to intervene on billboards, create art works inspired by the subject, give critical reviews about some well known Yugoslav literary works (the novel «Lagum» by Svetlana Velmar Janković). Participants showed interest for a wider social protest against the pressure of existing models which both women and men were placed into, but also Serbian men and Serbian women.

Considering that this was some kind of a pilot project, we hope there will be space and support to use this creative energy and invest it in further work on similar issues. Finally, this is a chance to thank the staff of «Milutin Bojic» Library which let us use their premises again thus showing they have an understanding for something that is still alternative.

3.3. Panel Discussion And Presentation Of The Book "Diary With Reservists" in Belgrade

On May 20th 2002, Documentation Center - Wars 1991 - 99 organized the presentation of the book titled "Diary with Reservists", by Nebojsa Jovanovic, a historian from Belgrade. The presentation was held in Rex Cultural Center (Belgrade) and supported by RTV B92. It included a public debate about the book, about this kind of literature dealing with past wars in this region, their role in peace building and psycho-social processes that were happening under the circumstances of war.

Besides the author, some guests took part in the debate: Tanja Tagirov, a journalist from «Vreme» newsmagazine from Belgrade, who was living in Zagreb during the war in Croatia, Nebojsa Petrovic, a social psychologist from Belgrade who is currently working on research about psychological aspects of reconciliation in the region of former Yugoslavia and Adnan Hasanbegovic, CNA Sarajevo team member, there as a peace activist.

The first part of the debate was dedicated to the book, the author, and his opinion about the events that had inspired him to write such a book. Among other things, he talked about the days he had spent on the front in Croatia and about what he was going through at the time.

Afterwards, the other guests gave their opinions on the book and on the past years of war, causes of violence that was committed, etc. The influence that the book may have on the process of reconciliation and peace building was also discussed, because this kind of literature contributes to understanding of the processes that were happening in the war and gives more complete insight into the elements of the conflict that had caused violence. One of the important and useful elements of the book, in terms of peace building, is the subject of various motivations of former Yugoslav Army reservists who were going to war, and their identity crisis. This can open space for thorough analysis and transformation of conflicts that caused these wars.

It's important that the book has been distributed in Croatia for quite some time already, with another title: "Let's take Zagreb".

At the end, people from the audience asked some questions and gave their comments.

We should mention that this debate happened while CNA team was preparing the series of panel discussions named «How I found myself in the war? How to reach sustainable peace?» planned to take place in Serbia, in June. The debate was useful to us to check out how relevant the subject was and because the author Nebojsa Jovanovic was one of several former soldiers who were going to take part in our project.

4. APPENDIX

4.1. Few Lines Written By Training Participants

Nevena Zuber from Karlovac

*«It does not matter how small the beginning may seem:
Once a good deed is done, it's done forever»
(Gandhi)*

Participation on Basic Training in Nonviolent Conflict transformation was a new and a **GREAT experience** for me. After the training, I can say it was very important to me that all **our differences** gathered together for those 10 days in Jahorina. Ever since that damned war has started, I wanted to know what people from other parts of former Yugoslavia were thinking about it. Were they against it just like I was? Coming here and taking part on the training surpassed all my expectations!! Why? When I walked through the door of CNA's office I got in touch with people whom I have never seen before in my life. I started to communicate with some of them as if I've known them all my life. I've gained great experience and knowledge. Some games and exercises that seemed easy (even childish), provoked stormy reactions I wasn't ready for and couldn't believe in. I was feeling safe inside the group and I was able to talk to everyone about anything, without any problems. What is important for me is that now, after the training I'm **reexamining** things. It's easier for me to accept some things; when I talk to people I'm listening to them in an active way; I try to really hear what they want to tell me; I don't loose my temper easily but at the same time I make it clear if something's bothering me or if I disagree. It's important to me that in difficult moments I had support from friends from the group and from the training team. People I knew only for a couple of days, were feeling I was in pain and were giving me support and strength to move on, which was something I'd never forget.

I find it's extremely important, especially for the society I come from, to have this kind of training events in nonviolent conflict transformation. It should be done for a wider circle of people. Post-war situation in my country is not exactly great because anyone can carry a gun and use it without thinking about consequences. People don't trust each other. Seminars like those **help peace building, renewal of trust between people that is lost**, and I dare to say **help dealing with the truth** - with all the things that have happened in the region of former Yugoslavia. We should struggle to find out what the truth is, even if it's ugly and painful. From my own experience of the training, I can say I now mistrust people less than before and I accept some problems and situations more easily. I'm aware that work on building of peace and true civil society takes time, lot of effort and patience, and also people who are going to fight for these causes. Training in nonviolent conflict transformation inspired me: to do more to discard violence as a (usual) method of resolving problems in society and country; to actively support change of behavior (of both people and countries) that encourages violence. Taking part in this training was a great encouragement for me to continue to fight for just and honest civil society and to work on peace building.

The message to CNA team:

*«As long as there's handful of people devoted to their cause,
struggle can only have one end and that is victory »
(Gandhi)*

Denijal Dervisevic from Tuzla

My name is Denijal Dervisevic. I'm from Youth Association of SDA (Stranka demokratske akcije - Party of Democratic Action) from Tuzla Canton of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This seminar-training was my first visit to Republic Srpska. I must admit that I didn't convince myself easily, because that's the most difficult thing, to accept the fact that I'll spend 10 days in the smaller entity of BiH.

All of my prejudices were definitely resolved and evaporated when I met people on the training. My stay in Jahorina was the bridge that spanned the river of prejudices. I met twenty-one new friends from Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Vojvodina, Montenegro and my dear Bosnia and Herzegovina. Some of those friends mean a lot to me, some even more, but all together mean THE MOST.

I am a traditionalist and a Muslim. Everyone accepted and respected my differences just as I did of theirs. Regarding few people from the training, I must point out that it wasn't necessary that we accepted any other views. We established our standpoints and looked for the possibilities to understand our individualities. Training events like these may set up a solid foundation for the future in the region of former Yugoslavia, because I didn't notice even for a moment we disagreed about any crucial issues. When I say crucial or basic issues, I don't think about gay rights or something like that, because it is something we all have in our hearts, and it's not easy to change it. However, the base of the problem and the feeling of betrayal by those who profitted from our suffering and manipulated the people for the sake of their own promotion into victims, was present in all of us. In my opinion, we showed we want change and reconciliation.

I feel that the reconciliation process will take long time. One should forgive, but must not forget, ever. CNA's initiative is excellent and their trainers are determined to implement their ideas. With God's will it will bear the fruit of reconciliation. Hopefully, we'll meet again. Until then I wish you all the best and God bless you.

Ajli Bajramovic from Zenica

"Nonviolence is the weapon of the strong"

This is the quotation from Mahatma Gandhi that one has every reason to think about. I take it to summarize my experience of a ten-day training in nonviolent conflict and transformation. Series of self-experiencing exercises, especially difficult ones like those on identity, made me dig under the surface that hides all my imperfections. In those days, I had enough time, space and I felt safe enough to explore the limits of my feeling of security - which allow me to be assertive towards the others; to explore the space where security ends and fear begins, loss of control and some other forms of violent behavior.

What kind of connection exists between nonviolent conflict transformation and peace building? For me - a strong one. An alternative concept like the one of this training, gave me a chance to get in touch with different people firsthand, to hear and try to understand different opinions, perceive my own attitudes and choices from a different perspective, shortly - to open the windows for some new horizons that might have been blurry or even completely unavailable or invisible.

For me, nonviolent approach of the conversation partner arouse interest for dialogue and cooperation, because it makes me feel safe, unlike the conversation with the person who persuades me and tries to change my attitude, which results in my fear and discomfort.

I don't want to generalize things, but judging from my experiences on the training, I presume most people react positively to understanding and willingness for cooperation.

With respect to that, I find that a nonviolent approach to conflict transformation can be used very well in peace building process, because while discussing controversial matters and using conversation models in which we express our wish to understand, we open possibilities to find solutions that may be satisfactory.

It would be ideal to integrate training events like this one and learning of these skills into educational system in order to make nonviolent communication the form of communication people learn first.

4.2. Car Registration In Sarajevo

Although it's not the kind of activity we usually report about, due to the amount of energy and time we spent doing it, here's a few words on what we had to go through over the past few months in order to have our car registered. CNA has been working in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 5 years already and has a legal status of a foreign humanitarian organization. I presume that we, being members of such an organization haven't had any special treatment in the whole process of car registration, but were undergone to "normal procedure". I will try to use terms and phrases most officials I got in touch were using, because I don't know any others, and perhaps it might be useful to some of you, one day.

Therefore, if you want to import and register a car that has proper papers identifying you as the owner of the car (which was the case here) you can expect the following: Until you reach the border of Bosnia and Herzegovina, everything goes smoothly, as expected. If you're stopped by an authorised person at some border or elsewhere and asked for a registration card, you will show it to them and continue to travel without any problems. Once you reach the border of BiH and declare your car for import you must have "a new customs number", because the old numbers are no longer valid, starting with December 31st 2001. Since we weren't informed about the change, we had no idea what the customs number was or what its purpose was, let alone the fact that we had to get a new one. The consequences of our "ignorance" were numerous: We were left waiting at the shipping service parking for 8 hours and finally advised to try some other border crossing, because: "Croats are there, you need to have the car registered in The Federation, so they might let you in". That sounded logical, didn't it? That's exactly what we did. Therefore, we had to leave the country, go back, and drive through the neighbouring Croatia to get to the next border crossing. It was the one on the Sava River, so we had to take a ferry. We were once again asked for either "a new customs number" or "the amount of 1500 DM as a deposit" from the shipping service. Since we didn't have the number and weren't willing to give the money away because of a reasonable doubt that we would lose it, customs officers told us to leave the car on a parking at the border. They took our colleague's passport, car key and the papers for the car and told us we were free to go. Where do you go at 9 P.M. when you get stuck somewhere near Orašje? We went to Sarajevo, which is a three-hours away by a car and returned the following day (again three more hours of driving) to the same border crossing. This time we had a

photocopy of the fax from The Chief of the Customs Head Office of the Federation of BiH, allowing us to drive the car to Sarajevo (I don't remember what the permit sounded like, with all the phrases and expressions customs and shipping officials use).

Paying the duties and clearing through customs should be a rather simple procedure. However, you may encounter the following difficulties: despite all previous agreements, you keep coming to the customs and end up waiting for several hours for the authorized person to estimate what the car is worth and to sign "customs entry form". When that is over, technical car check is required and then you need to submit a request for registration to the police department, together with all the papers and payment receipts. Among other things, you need to have all the documents translated from English into the local language, done and sealed by a certified court interpreter. You also need to have a paper called "notice of de-registration" from the country where the car was bought, to confirm the former owner of the car. The document that is accepted as a registration card in other countries with your name as the owner of the car, is not really a registration card but a "Zoll plates card", according to local authorities here. When you obtain a notice of withdrawal (fax is accepted) and present it at the Police Department, you will be asked for a sales contract (in this case, fax is not accepted), also from the country where the car was bought, to confirm you're the owner. "Zoll plates card" is not a car registration card, therefore it's not enough. Once you got it, you're told that you should have brought it straight away. You're also told you could pick up your registration card the next day. After that, you're told to come back on Monday, and on Monday again to come back the next day. When you come again, you're told that as far as they're concerned everything was fine, but since there was a "rotation" of officials, new chief insisted that all the documents in English, already certified and translated by an official court interpreter had to be additionally certified in court, in order to confirm the authenticity of the court interpreter. The fact that the certified court interpreter you've hired is on the list of the interpreters which is published in The Official Register of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is not enough. Court officials informed us that we actually needed an "apostille seal". In order to get it we had to have the "apostille seal" given by any court of the country where the document was originally issued. Since we didn't have that seal, we asked the Ministry of Justice of the Federation of BiH to issue a receipt in order to confirm that our court interpreter is on their list. Although they seemed to be surprised that anyone would ask for such a document, they gave it to us. In case you ever go to the Ministry of Justice, don't be surprised with the kindness, understanding, attentiveness and willingness of people who work there. We must point out that the way employees of the Ministry treated us was really nice, which unfortunately was not a rule but an exception in Sarajevo. New chief "has obliged us and allowed" to have the car registered with that receipt, on condition that we don't ask her for such a favour again, for at least next couple of months. Her request seemed odd, since the last time we imported a car was five years ago. CNA is a humanitarian organization that doesn't engage in import of automobiles.

In order to import and register a car in Sarajevo, you need to go to several offices and departments for more than forty times, which takes about two months. One thing may sound comforting, though: while paying for all the customs duties, taxes and other dues you won't experience any problems. Everything goes smoothly.

At the end, I sincerely hope and wish you to have a much easier and simpler procedure in case you ever need to import and have a car registered in Sarajevo. You might be luckier, should you avoid to have car papers with Serb name, listed as owner, as we have had this time.

Nedžad Horozović

5. WORK PLAN

Activity plan of Sarajevo office for the upcoming 3 months:

Basic training in nonviolent conflict transformation will be held 26.6-5.8.2002 in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Adnan Hasanbegovic and Tamara Smidling from Sarajevo office, Milan Colic from Belgrade office and Bosa Janjusevic from Belgrade (trainee from our last Training for Trainers programme) will be in the training team.

Activity plan of Belgrade office for the upcoming 3 months:

Implementation of the project "Four views, from past to the future", which deals with past wars, will be done in 4 towns in Serbia, in the form of public meetings and media apperances. Former soldier from Croat, Bosniak and Serb side will participate in the meetings.

Preparation and begining of the Training for Training programme.

Further information about these activities can be read in Belgrade 3-month report.

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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For Centar za nenasilnu akciju

in Sarajevo, July 2002.

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