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**CENTAR ZA NENASILNU AKCIJU**  
**CENTRE FOR NONVIOLENT ACTION**

# 6-MONTH REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2005 - FEBRUARY 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.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Dear friends,

The report about the work and the activities of the Centre for Nonviolent Action covering the period from September 2005 to February 2006, which is in front of you, comes in a form that is somewhat different from the reports we've done so far. Apart from the articles about the activities we planned and implemented, in this report you can find personal reviews and comments on the following themes: disturbing role of the Serbian Orthodox Church in the society of Serbia (and elsewhere); difficult process of dealing with the past in our region; some gloomy tendencies in Croatian society and its public; traps and malice of so called «Euro-Atlantic integrations» i.e. joining the "glorious" NATO, etc.

Since the basic idea of our reports is to make what we do as available and transparent as we can, as well as to do so with what we think, plan or occupy ourselves with, we hope that the new additions will contribute to more intensive and valuable communication between CNA's work and the people who are in any way interested in it or whose concern it is. That's why your reviews, comments and reactions are more than welcome.

Sincerely,  
CNA team

## 2. TRAININGS

### **Basic Training in Nonviolent Conflict Transformation, *Tivat, October 21 - 31.2005.***

CNA organized the basic training in nonviolent conflict transformation that was held in the "Palma" Hotel, in Tivat, Montenegro from October 21 - 31, 2005. It was CNA's 23<sup>rd</sup> training and the training team included Adnan Hasanbegović, Ivana Franović and Tamara Šmidling from CNA and our friend from Ulcinj, Edina Hasanaga.



The group of trainees gathered 20 people from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia and Croatia, members and activists of various organizations, associations and institutions.

The training covered the following themes: communication, team work, decision making, and understanding of conflicts, violence, gender, identity, national identity, peace building and creative conflict transformation, nonviolent action.



We think that participants received some of the core ideas of the training: incentive to peace building and dealing with the past very well. During the training there were plenty of discussions that contributed to understanding of social and cultural phenomena recognised as causes and "pillars" of the conflict and violence which are often off-handily and shallowly accepted in our communities. Those are primarily problems like nationalism, discrimination, religious and ideological systems, state forming, collective and individual guilt, responsibility and victims. There were also discussions about the wide spread hate speech and various prejudices.



The group was regionally and ethnically balanced and an additionally important element was the presence of individuals who belonged to ethnic minorities. Their presence and experiences they shared during the work process contributed directly to rising awareness about the existing discrimination and ethnically-inspired violence that had happened in the nineties.

From the very beginning, the presence of three women from the Association of Families of the Missing Persons from the Wars from 1991-99 had an important and striking impact on the entire training. It brought enough elements of dealing with the war past and helped the atmosphere of

the training to gain seriousness and weight. Their presence enabled the themes related to war and problems with dealing with the past to be tackled in a more direct way, which is usually difficult to do. It usually the case because participants of the training often feel restraint and are afraid to talk about different perceptions and attitudes towards conflicts and violence related to war so it is necessary to cover those themes gradually, little by little. That was quite different on this training because at the very beginning people who had lost close family members clearly expressed their pain and problems regarding the way they were

dealing with it. That determined the pace of the work and influenced quite a bit the overall atmosphere that the group had to deal with which in this case went very well. We estimate that it would be really important to work and cooperate with the associations of families of the missing persons in rising awareness of their social responsibility for the process of dealing with the past, not just as victims but also as persons who have a certain social power and great responsibility in the process of peace building, even though they carry a heavy, traumatic experience.

Younger trainees had difficulties with becoming aware of their social responsibility (especially for the past) and with an adopted preconception about young people being unburdened with war and nationalism. It is understandable, but after the first few days of the training it turned out to be unrealistic. The approach that youth of former Yugoslavia is unencumbered by the war often results from the superficial conclusion. In fact, one might say that it is impossible that young population isn't rather seriously "infected" with the ideas and conflicts that originate from the war and post-war period. That is quite obvious, because we can see young people participating in most nationalistic acts of hooliganism that happen on sport matches and street demonstrations where one can hear the most brutal outbursts of hatred. It is quite clear that generations that were brought up during the nineties have a problematic relationship and view on different ethnic groups in their communities and surrounding and that really shows the devastating influence and consequences of the wars and years of nationalistic propaganda. That was thematized on this training through various discussions, and the most intensively within the themes of peace building, national identities and prejudices, where certain breakthrough was achieved towards re-examining and rising awareness of responsibility for social events, certainly by taking into account person's age and experiences.

At the end of the training one could feel the increased motivation and empowerment for peace work inside the group, after the initial withholding and difficulties in dealing with the problems related to peace building, resignation and feeling powerless to a relatively strong impetus to activism judging from trainees' comments and reviews.

Before the end of the training trainees had a chance to watch "Traces" - our documentary about the war veterans. They shared their impressions that the film was emotional and important to them and it seemed to us that it additionally helped them understand importance and complexity of regional work, process of dealing with the past and overcoming difficulties that have accumulated in our societies.

One of this training's learning points for the future when making a concept of basis training is to insist and focus more on those issues that are more directly tied to peace building. With that respect we should try to cover more thoroughly problems that resulted from the period of war and dealing with the burden of past and menacing social phenomena, to the detriment of more complete mastering of the skills that the training offers.

You can find more details about the training in a documentation titled "Clearing Up in the Head" which is available on our web site.

### **Training Events on «Dealing with the Past»**

***Milići, Bosnia and Herzegovina, September 30 - October 3; December 9 - 12, 2006.***

For many citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the region of Eastern Bosnia is just another name for the locality of war crimes and some of the biggest war atrocities this country suffered, in the period of time from 1992 - 1996. Even though it's been ten years since the end of the war, Srebrenica, Kravica, Foča, Višegrad, Zvornik ... are just some of the names that cause shiver but also create a need to shed some light, heal and recover from the agonizing history. Having all that in mind, it seemed to us that the initiative taken by people from a local organization called «Odisej» from Bratunac to organize two training events on the theme of dealing with the past was certainly something worth supporting.

The original idea was to get together youth two small Bosnian towns of Bratunac and Hadžići that both had «difficult» history and were mutually connected in an unusual way. Anyway, during the war, small town of Hadžići, nearby Sarajevo, was under the control of the Army of the Republic of Srpska until the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed and so called re-

integration started. The Serb population then moved collectively to a small town of Bratunac, at the very border between Bosnia and Serbia. All the connections were broken and young people from both towns were growing up being "inspired" by national history and narratives of the others as enemies.

During the preparation process, the circle of participants was widened to the entire Bosnia and Herzegovina; hence the two training events also gathered people from: Bijeljina, Janja, Prijedor, Sarajevo, Trebinje, Srebrenica, Tuzla, Milići, etc.

The training team for the first training consisted of Nedžad and Tamara from CNA, together with our colleague Ismira Zilić from Zenica, and the second one was facilitated by Adnan and Tamara from CNA, with the support of Nermin Karačić from Sarajevo.

The training concept which was directly focused on work on the theme of dealing with the past was a novelty to us and quite a challenge, especially with respect to the possibilities to work on such a sensitive problem with the group of youngsters and in a short period of time. Nevertheless, our experience showed that it is quite possible to work on these issues, with a clear and explicit announcement to people, what really was the subject of the training, and with a careful moderation and well thought choice of sub-themes.

Both training events lasted for three working days, during which issues of relations between our local communities towards the past were discussed as well as different strategies of attitudes towards violence from the past (denial; justification; search for the truth; etc.); taboos that our communities maintain with respect to those issues; who are our «national heroes» and how do people from other ethnic groups perceive them, etc.

One of the benchmarks of the first training which was held in Milići was the visit to the Potočari Memorial Centre that was initiated by the participants.

Despite the initial attempts to avoid and elude some difficult questions (which is somewhat understandable considering that talking about issues of guilt, responsibility, justice and absolution is not easy even for much more experienced peace activists), the discussions became heated and switched from the course of "as young people, we have nothing to do with it" to very open and personal exchanges. The most fiery discussions were those about the nature and causes of war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as about the future of this country, that really showed how difficult it was for young people (and not only for them!) to pull away from the clichés they were being fed to, by the society and their surroundings, and think of some other approach to those questions except the ones based on the principles of "we, Serbs" or "we, Bosniaks". That is the reason why it is difficult to shake off the impression that there's a long way to go before our communities really acknowledge the possibility to look at issues related to war and past from the standpoint of values that are more universal than "national questions and interests", as seen through the glasses coloured in exclusion and lack of empathy for other people's suffering.

Until then, the most important thing is to support every initiative that is true in its aspirations towards some other approach and tries to make young people true protagonists of those processes, instead of pushing them to be voluntary national workers who suppose to be apolitical and "have nothing to do with all that".

Training events were financially supported by QPSW Sarajevo.



## **Training in Basics of Nonviolent Conflict Transformation with Participants from Kosovo and Serbia**

***Tivat, Montenegro, November 7-13, 2005***

Training in nonviolent conflict transformation with participants from Serbia and Kosovo was held in the "Palma" hotel in Tivat, Montenegro from November 7-13, 2005.

The initiative for the implementation of this training originally came from the trainees of the last Training for Trainers Program, which had been held in 2004: Nina Vukosavljević and Bojan Veselić from Belgrade, Nexhat Ismajli from Gnjilane and our colleague Sanja Deanković. At the same time, all of them were members of the training team of this training. The activity was financially supported by CNA Belgrade, i.e. by BMZ.

When the idea for this training was conceived we were under the strong impression of what was going on in Kosovo in March 2004. After some sporadic and localized conflicts many non-Albanians were exiled from Kosovo and the events that followed lead to destruction of property that was believed to be in connection to Albanian ethnic community or to religious identity of the majority of Albanians. We wanted to support social engagement of the future carriers of social changes as well as to contribute to establishment of conditions to encourage inter-ethnic dialogue.

The training was attended by 16 participants from the region of Kosovo and Serbia, out of 20 as originally planned, because we encountered a lot of last-minute cancellations.

We feared how the training would go; because during the first two days of the training the division amongst the trainees was noticeable even in the way they were sitting (participants from Serbia were on one and those from Kosovo on the other side of the room). The opinions were expressed quite reservedly and cautiously. We were under the impression that more energy was invested into effort to prevent anyone from being insulted, then to open up some sensitive and important themes related to everyday life of Kosovo and Serbia.

It was especially the case with discussions about the present relations between those two ethnic groups, therefore the refuge was taken in putting more emphasis on "Roma question" in Serbia and Kosovo, which was on the other hand, really important to trainees of Roma ethnic background.

However, as time went by, the atmosphere of mutual trust was established amongst the participants, both during the workshops and informal time they were spending together.

All of that created safer space for mutual confrontation and ample discussions on the theme of violence and prejudices, where people very clearly articulated what bothered them about the deeds and behaviour of the others as well as how they perceived situation in Kosovo and how they felt about the beginning of negotiations on Kosovo status.

We were under the impression that many people from the group truly made an effort to understand the position of those with different identity from their own.

Culmination of the training was the workshop on the theme of "identity", which was designed in a way to make participants "switch" identities and talk about the experience of other person's ethnic identity. We find that this was one of the biggest values of this training. That was expressed after the workshops and in both written and oral evaluations of the whole training, because for most people it was the first chance they had to meet ethnic Albanian, i.e. Serb.

We are sorry that there was only one ethnic Serb who lives in Kosovo in the trainees' group, because we think that participation of more Serbs from Kosovo would give the training and additional quality.

Training was held in Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian language, which is not a mother tongue for most people from Kosovo, and we want to underline how important and visible was the effort of people from Kosovo to talk and help each other to articulate better what they had to say.

After the experience gathered on creating and facilitating this training, it seems to us that there should be much more activities like that and chances for people from Kosovo and Serbia to spend time together, get to know each other and demystify and understand the true meaning of identity of the 'other' as well as all the things that come out of that, because our social and political reality is burdened with fear, prejudices, stereotypes and discrimination and other forms of violence against members of ethnic and religious groups who are minorities in those societies.

## **Workshop on «Trauma and Reconciliation»**

**Sarajevo, January 27-29, 2006**

**Centre for Nonviolent Action Sarajevo in cooperation with Mennonite Central Committee**

It is certain that trauma and its consequences are a part of the most difficult war "legacy" of our region, whose burden most of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina and wider region of former Yugoslavia continue to feel and carry around in both direct and indirect way. We often encounter traces of trauma, both in our work and in day-to-day, live communication with people. Signs of trauma manifest on different, sometimes quite unexpected levels. Therefore, we've decided to deepen our knowledge about the subject, with special emphasis on connection between the fact that our societies are traumatized and the need to start the reconciliation process within those societies. What is the mutual relation between trauma and reconciliation and what are the challenges that trauma poses in front of that already difficult process - those were the two key questions that we were dealing with during the two and a half days of the training.

Eleven trainees, from Serbia and BiH attended the workshop which was facilitated by Amela and Rendi Puljek-Shank (MCC SEE). Their approach to the problem of trauma was not exclusively psychological, but very much focused on problem of collective traumatization and ways in which societies, with more or less success, "built in" traumatic events and emotions related to them, into collective, historic memory. Over the time, narratives that are formed in such a way become for a great many members of certain ethnic or religious community, the only valid explanation of the past, the present and the future which is something that should not be ignored, neither when we try to understand causes of conflicts and violence, nor when we set up a model and approach to dealing with the past, suitable for a certain social context. Even a hasty look at the reality of our societies, ten years after the war, shows us that we're still running together in an enchanted circle of violence, trauma and pain we experienced and did not process, but instead cemented the existing feelings of hurt, helplessness, shame and humiliation, along with a widespread manipulation with victims, that is not only an obstacle to true reconciliation and normal life but to any kind of progress whatsoever.

After this second training on trauma that we have completed, we consider it is important to point out that we do not draw motivation to work on this subject from our desire to "cure" and be therapists, but that it comes out of our need for a comprehensive understanding of social processes in which we are protagonists, as well. In some cases, those processes cannot be understood without taking into account a sad fact that destinies of thousands of people who had been killed, wounded, exiled and humiliated, surely left some trace in hearts and minds of those who are today expected to deal with the past, apologise, forgive, reconcile...

## **3. DOCUMENTARY FILMS**

### **Promotions of the Documentaries: "Traces" and "It Can't Last Forever"**

On February 24, we held a promotion of our documentary "TRACES" in Split, which was the first public screening of the film in Croatia.

Since one of the film's protagonists (and also the organizer of the promotion) feared that the event would attract radical and to violence prone nationalists, the invitations were sent through network of personal contacts to avoid advertising in media. The attendance was poor - about 25-30 people came to see the film and talk to two of the protagonists and the author, at the "Zlatna vrata" movie theatre. The support to the film was quite evident and in accordance to the way people had been invited. The presence of a few reporters who covered the promotion enabled at least some more people to hear about the event afterwards.

We made a principal agreement with the regional TV station "Jadran" to broadcast the film as a part of the show that deals with controversial issues and has quite good ratings. The TV

station covers 75% of the territory of Croatia. If the agreement is implemented it will be interesting to hear the reactions coming from a wider audience.

TVBH (Bosnia and Herzegovina state-owned TV station) broadcast "TRACES" (twice), as well as RTRS (Republic of Srpska state-owned TV) in prime-time. The film caused numerous reactions - mostly positive ones, but also those that were disapproving of the criticism of one's own side. After the cumbersome procedure, RTS (Serbian state TV) made a decision to show the film, but it's been 2 months since then and it hasn't happened yet. The film will be screened on many regional TV stations across Serbia, with the support of the regional TVK9 from Kragujevac, in March.

There were two premiers of the documentary "It Can't Last Forever" in February - first in Media Centre in Sarajevo and then in the Centre for Cultural Decontamination in Belgrade. The film treats the relationship between Bosniaks and Serbs, 10 years after the end of the war, unclosing the existing prejudices, fears and hopes of people from different parts of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. About 70 people attended the premiere in Sarajevo. Judging by their reactions, the film made a strong impression on them and was followed by a discussion that lasted for more than



an hour. It was interesting that most of the people who participated in discussion were bothered by the nationalistic tone in a statement of a Serb woman. We feel quite satisfied with what we did as it seemed the film stroke the right note and that it could be a catalyst for a constructive discussion about the responsibility for the past and the present. TVBH has already shown an interest in broadcasting it.

Belgrade premiere of the same film was poorly attended with only about 30 people who came to the freezing auditorium of the Centre for Cultural Decontamination. Even though the audience again liked the film very much, there's a distinctive feeling of dissatisfaction because of the low attendance.

It is sure that if the advertising was better (besides the newspaper ad there was also a banner on a very popular The B92 News website) there would be much higher turnout. Such an ad campaign would require several thousand euros which is foolish to invest in a premiere of a documentary. If the presentations of our book in Gnjilane and Podgorica gather more than 100 people each and only 30 people show up at the film premier in Belgrade, with its population of 2 million, it is clear that we should not make any more public promotions in Belgrade. Instead, we should broadcast the film on TV stations which gives the wider public a chance to see it if they are interested in it. It is quite likely that this kind of event would have much more audience in smaller towns and that it would be easier to initiate discussions in those circumstances and get the idea of what kind of impression film leaves on the audience.

## Unpublished Interview with Nenad Vukosavljević

*The interview was given to the «Feral Tribune», a weekly newspaper, based in Split, Croatia regarding the first public screening of the documentary «Traces» in Croatia, but it was never published in the magazine due to the assessment of the editorial staff evaluating the replies as «mixed-up and unelaborated» and that they relativize guilt and responsibility for the war and the crimes committed in the war.*

1. Tell us something about the people who worked on the film ("Traces"), how did you get the idea to make it and what was the basic motive to make the film with

*confessions of combatants who experienced an actual catharsis and repent for taking part in the war?*

The idea to make this film came as a result of our work with combatants of the wars from the triangle of Serbia and Montenegro-Bosnia and Herzegovina-Croatia, which was something that Centre for Nonviolent Action had been doing for the past several years. Fifteen former combatants were speaking on public forums organized in Serbia and Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the period from 2002 to 2005. The forums were called "4 Views, From the Past: How I Found Myself in War? Towards the Future: How to Reach Sustainable Peace?". We found the inspiration for the film in those people, who had courage to speak publicly about reasons that had lead them to be combatants and transformation of their views that happened in the meantime. Some of them appear in the film "Traces".

The most important thing for me was to show that we cannot lump together all the people from one side who founded themselves in the war as combatants, and to create space to hear their own personal stories and the stories of people close to them - firstly to experience them and feel them as people who carry their own pain, dilemmas and needs. The tendency was to eradicate rather a uniform picture that exists in our countries and societies about the others, and especially about those who took an active part in the war. Simply speaking, that picture is mostly reduced to "us - the good ones, who defended something" and "them - the bad ones, who wanted to harm us and take away something that belonged to us". And those voices that do not fit into the pattern are labelled as "traitors", which should explain everything. Labelling the combatants from our "side" as traitors is a bit more difficult and that's where that group of people's power and responsibility lies for encouraging dealing with the past in an honest way, based mostly on criticism of one's own side.

2. *Was it difficult to find interviewees? How did you get in touch with them? I cannot fail to notice that you have only one conversationalist from Serbia, or two really with his wife. What's the reason for that? Did you have any reasons to include so many people from Croatia and was it hard to find combatants from Serbia who wanted to talk to you?*

It was relatively easy to find four people, former combatants, who were the pillars of the story. It was up to them to find each one more person who was going to talk, and the choice was left to them, completely.

I can say that there was a problem to find interviewees from Croatia, because many people refused to talk on the record. It seems to me that many people are still afraid to come out publicly with their opinions, if they are different from the story one can usually hear in Croatia, that goes something like "we were the victims, they were the aggressors, according to that the homeland war was sacred and we could not possibly be responsible neither for the war nor for the crimes and the fact that Serbs fled".

To be honest, I think it would be hard to find many people in Serbia willing to look back with so much self-criticism in front of the camera, as Novica did in the film.

It was important to us not to reduce the story to three sides and their representatives, because those people do not represent their nations, but themselves. That's why the forums were called "4 Views", not "3 Views" and on different forums the fourth person was the one whose name was associated with some other ethnicity. Two men who appear in the film have Bosniak names, but both live in Croatia and during the war they were soldiers of the Croatian Army.

3. *Was the film broadcast in Serbia? On which television? Did you have any problems related to that? What were the reactions?*
4. *Same question for Bosnia and Croatia?*

Until today, the film was screened only on a public promotion in Belgrade, if we don't count various semi-closed occasions like in conferences, seminars, faculties etc. We received verbal confirmation that Channel 2 of Radio Television Serbia (RTS) would show the film at some normal evening-time. After that, it will also be offered to many regional and local TV stations and we expect they will broadcast it. The decision making process in RTS took rather a long time due to its content which is quite sensitive, but as the editor who had seen the film said: "there's all sorts of things in it, someone higher up is going to have to make the decision".

The film was shown, and even rerun on state-owned television (TVBH) in Bosnia, as a part of their special program dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the Dayton Peace Agreement. It has been announced on TVRTRS (TV of the Republic of Srpska) to be broadcast, on Friday, February 4<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM.

The first public screening in Croatia will be in Split, three weeks from now, on February 24<sup>th</sup>. That's for sure, and perhaps also during the DOX festival that will be held in Zagreb, in February.

We want the film to be broadcast in all three countries, on TV stations that have national coverage. We expected it would be easily attainable in Bosnia and Herzegovina, more difficult in Serbia and very much so in Croatia and that turned out to be correct. I'd be really thrilled if for example Croatian TV proved me wrong.

As for the reactions, the most of them came from Bosnia, and I'd like to mention one that I heard of by coincidence. Cashier at a supermarket in Bosnia said something like this: "I saw the film in which people from all sides talk about the war openly, and how they feel about it now, but totally different from what we can usually hear, really honest". These kinds of reactions mean more to me, believe me, when they come from people who are not representatives of who-knows-what, who have their own tough lives to live, big-hearted people who can just hear other people when they speak and not judge them based on their names.

There were also reactions like "isn't it just a drop in the ocean, what can it change when an average person see 50 other things that only aim to confirm the image of the other nation as an enemy?" Well, perhaps it is a drop in the ocean, but does that mean we should just let go and sink in or try to change something? If I was guided by calculations with respect to who was stronger, I would have given up long time ago. What helps me withstand are also those people who talk in the film, I feel it's my duty to them, as well as to thousands of those who will never have a chance to make themselves heard, either because they fear to come forward or because they are unable to win their own space to speak up. But I don't want to make it sound as if I'm doing it all for the others. I work on peace building for my sake too, because I want to live in an honest society where people are free and willing to stand up to violence, in a society that learns from its mistakes and watches closely that no one ever repeats them.

5. *What's the atmosphere in Serbia when it comes to such initiatives that are related to dealing with the past? Are they still marginal (just like in other two countries) or can we say that they produce some result (and what kind)?*

In Serbia, dealing with the past is perceived and mostly reduced to the dimension of dealing with the crimes that were committed in the name of Serbia and Serbs. It certainly is a very important aspect of the whole process, but it seems to me that the most important thing is that the society recognises that it is in its interest, that it's not done upon some request outside, as most of the politicians in Serbia think, but because we don't want killers amongst us. I'm afraid that in 20 years from now, some of those who are now in Hague, may come back to Serbia and be welcomed as martyrs and heroes.

Therefore, one thing for me is the need for justice to be served, by showing respect and fulfilling obligations to the victims and their loved ones, while another thing is making a social consensus that national interest and patriotism cannot be marked by crime and injustice. Finally, we have to face the responsibility for which we will never be taken to court, and that is the responsibility for supporting the war. Many people say today: "no one asked us about the war; it's not the people to be blamed". Even if the people is not to be blamed, it is still responsible, and we sure were asked about it. The thing is that a lot of people supported the war while they were thinking they were going to "win". And it's probably normal that people want to escape that responsibility, because, my God, you should look at yourself in the mirror, confess something to yourself, and there are very few people who have the courage to do that, because even today admitting that you were wrong is considered a weakness here. It's not a weakness, but courage, because if we want to learn something and make a better and more just society we cannot bury our heads in the sand. And when I say 'we', I do include myself as well, and I do not allow myself to judge the others, moralize and gloat over my own "sinlessness" as some people in Serbia do. That

irritates people with a good reason, and instead of encouraging dealing with the past, it does just the opposite.

Those are the reasons why I think that the initiatives for dealing with the past in Serbia are still on the margin, but at least they are strong enough to be recognisable, and not shy like elsewhere.

In comparison to Croatia, it seems to me that it is easier for us to start with that process, because unlike Croatia, we do not have consensus of the political elite standing above us, about the "holiness of the homeland war" when it comes both to its righteousness and its consequences, and the results that were achieved through this war. As much as I see and hear, every time someone mentions responsibility or, God forbid, guilt of individuals and the chain that those individuals acted within, it causes a reaction like "it's a sacrilege of the values of the homeland war".

It's not my intention to deny main political responsibility and guilt for the wars that belongs to Serbia and its former leadership. Although, there's a tendency in Serbia to blame Milošević for everything and to make him our scapegoat, thus escaping the responsibility of the whole establishment he was on top of and (responsibility) of the people in Serbia who supported that, at the time. Who can ever forget the rejoicing over the "victory in Vukovar" for example!

Even though it is highly distasteful to point the finger to the neighbour's yard, I cannot restrain from mentioning that I feel quite appalled with all that has happened with "Latinica" (Croatian talk-show), with the "trial" in the Parliament, reactions of the representative of the human rights organization that took a chance to cast the stone ... - really repulsive and sad.

I feel really sorry for all the courageous people in Croatia that I know who have to fight the established value system that the homeland war is sanctity. At least in Serbia, no one dares to call those wars sacred, and to be honest it is more because they lost them than because they really feel that no war can be sacred. In fact, when we scratch the surface, things look alike, except that due to the circumstances, it is much more difficult to work on it in Croatia. I know that I can't do much or help in Croatia since my name disqualifies me, even though I'd like to, but what I do know is that the fact that such initiatives exist in Croatia is a support to me, and the other way round.

You know, when we were doing those forums with combatants in Serbia, on almost every one of them, people from the audience were asking: 'and when are you going to organize it in Croatia?' So: it's OK, it's fine, what you do is all right, it's fair, doesn't hurt anybody, but you go to Croatia now'. There's a group of people in Croatia with whom we have collaborated and we still do, and they are trying, but it's a gruelling work, and I wouldn't want to be in their shoes. Although it's inappropriate, I must say it and you can go ahead and leave it out, but I have to hand it to you in Feral, as far as I'm concerned you really represent the conscience of this country and of the nation which is the majority here. That is the true patriotism, for me: I love my country and I fight to make it better for all those who live in it and I do not justify violence but expose it.

6. *One of the interviewees, Marko from Split, talks about an official view in Croatia, which is widely accepted by the public that the war in Croatia was positive because it brought the victory against the aggressor. That fact really obstructs any kind of critical analysis of the war in Croatia that would go over the boundaries of „underground“ (media, political and the smaller part of the public). What's it like in Serbia? What's the people's view of the war in Serbia, since all those who long for a war to have a meaning do not have any straw to grasp for? Is the public in Serbia ready to face the fact that it took part and supported the war that brought only the bad things to both their country and the other two?*
7. *You are most interested in the issue of responsibility, i.e. guilt in the film. Why is that so? Why did you think it was important to find people who consider themselves responsible, even just by participating, for all the bad things that had happened to "the other ones"?*
8. *Are you afraid that treating the warriors from all three countries equally, in the film, might be perceived as an attempt of "making the aggressor and the victim look the same" as this kind of approach to war in former Yugoslavia is frequently commented in Croatia? It is obvious that you didn't want to put an emphasis on the*

*level of political responsibility of each state, which is undoubtedly different. What was important to point out then, what was your priority to show?*

I am afraid of it, how can I not be. I'd be sorry if that stopped anybody at least from hearing what those people were saying. I've already said what I think about the political responsibility, and I don't doubt that there will always be some people in Croatia who believe they should object because not every sentence I say contain such judgement. Just like in Serbia where the majority expect of me to go on and on how others committed crimes, too, while most Bosniaks will expect me to mention the genocide in Srebrenica and that the Republic of Srpska should be abolished. If they agree that I and the other people who made this film should be crucified, well, maybe that's some kind of accomplishment too, and it tells something about the societies in which we all live.

I demand the right to say what I think, and not to talk about the things others expect to hear from me, as a precondition to have a dialogue in the first place. As if we didn't hear them so many times, it's all right, now you listen to me, and if you don't want to - don't deny my right to think what I think (while at the same time, I neither endanger anybody nor threaten them) and to do what my conscience tells me to.

If I disregard for a moment what international law says about the aggression, without any intention to declare it's irrelevant, I must notice that in both Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, citizens of those countries massively participated in the war against each others, defending their settlements and attacking the neighbours who were also living there. (That doesn't mean that Serbia had nothing to do with it, it sure well did, from military and political involvement, encouragement, interference and influence.) How about we deal with that fact, and the reasons and consequences for it, when we interpret the past?

When we talk about the aggression and the victim, do we think about the entire nations? As far as I can see, the answer is mostly 'yes'. Serbs are the aggressors, the others are victims. Actually, it's unjust that they are not all on trial together (I'll disregard the Montenegrins, quite unjustifiably). Hmmm. Well, isn't that exactly the thing that Serb radicals/fascists want to hear? Their whole shallow story is based on people they want to use as a shelter, all over again, so they could hide the blood on their hands. And are there anyone like that, with you? - You tell me.

How is it possible to make equal the aggressor and the victim, anyway!? Do we disregard that what determines the roles of the victim and the aggressor is the situation and the things that a person (or a group) does in that situation? The one who commits evil and the injustice is the aggressor, but the same person (or persons) may as well be victim in some other situation. One does not exclude the other; those two categories neither annul each other nor are they identity features, as some often try to present them. For me the aggressors are also those who promote hatred, violence, discrimination and revenge, even though they undoubtedly experienced horrible pain and injustice and were the victims, in the past.

And I must return to the stone that is cast... At the time, I'm editing the film that treats Serbian-Croatian dialogue in which one of the veterans from the "Association of the Demilitarized Defenders of the Homeland War" says: "Everyone is eager to cast the stone, but the Bible says - He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone".

Let me get back to "Traces". There are 8 people who talk in the film, and we can count them according to their names, classify them into ethnic groups and examine its balance, etc. But, I'll say it again, there are just eight people speaking, in their own name, and not in the name of their nations, not in the name of all the combatants who fought on the same side as they did. It is tragic how difficult it is to resist the impulse to classify them to different sides and judge them accordingly. I think that we will be better off once we leave the present system of classifications and allow the possibility that sharing a close views on the war, the past and, above all, the future, does not have to be defined by the ethnicity we belong to.

## 4. BOOKS

### **Manual „Nonviolence?” For Work With Adults In Nonviolent Conflict Transformation Translated To Hungarian Language - "Erőszakmentesség?"** *Published in November 2005*

Until 2005, we have issued the Manual "Nonviolence?" in Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian (2000), Macedonian (2001), Albanian language (2002), and now we can proudly announce that it is available in Hungarian language, too. There is a great demand for this edition, originally titled "Erőszakmentesség?", that we really haven't expected to this extent.

Initiative to translate the manual came from the organization called Zenith Workshop (Zenith Műhely) from Subotica, therefore the whole process was organized in cooperation with them and Berghof Stiftung supported the idea financially.

In the fall of 2004 when we were submitting the project proposal for translation of the Manual into Hungarian to Berghof Stiftung, situation in Vojvodina, where there's a great need for this kind of literature, was really shaken by many (ethnically inspired) incidents. At the time the Manual in Hungarian was published (October - November 2005), those incidents (if we can call them incidents in the first place) doubled and inflamed with the presence of several fascist groups. That is why it is especially important to us that we were publicly exposed with the Manual that promotes peace building.

*For the first time, we've organized the promotion/presentation of the Manual and even more importantly, we sent copies to some primary and secondary schools in Vojvodina* (where the Hungarian language is used). Promotions were quite poorly attended, but it was important that people from education and media came, which was exactly our main target group. Promotions were held in three cities in Vojvodina: Subotica, Novi Sad and Bečej, where there was great interest for both the Manual in Hungarian as well as the one in Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian language.

When we were distributing the Manual to primary and secondary schools, the response was excellent: people from schools called, asking if they could get some more copies in Hungarian and Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian language, thanking us for the copies we had sent, telling us how valuable it was for their work etc.

We received especially affirmative feedback about the Manual from people who teach civil education. That is, within that subject they cover the theme of nonviolence, for which there isn't any literature available at all, not in Serbian-Croatian-Bosnian language, let alone Hungarian. Recently, we've received a phone call from a pedagogue in a secondary school in Vojvodina who said that we encouraged him to teach nonviolence within the curriculum of civil education, not just for half a semester, but for an entire one! And that is not the only case.

We've got the impression that promoting the Manual and sending it to schools doesn't mean that we've just promoted the Manual, but work on peace building in general, which should be more visible in public. This time it was achieved, which is especially important in the current circumstances in Vojvodina.

It is important to mention that the promotion was particularly supported by the Department of Education and Culture of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina as well as by the Department of the North Bačka County from Subotica. Promotions were held in the Executive Council of The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina in Novi Sad and in the City Hall in Subotica, which clearly indicates that the authorities recognized the value and need for peace work, although we hope that in the future this recognition will be materialised by some other activities and not only by offering their premises for these or similar events.

The Manual in Hungarian is a valuable experience for us. We're glad that the initiative to translate it was proposed by some other, local organization, like in this case, by Zenith Műhely Workshop from Subotica, with whom we had a good feeling of cooperation and understanding, that was unfolding more and more as cooperation continued. Apart from that,

it was new to us to present such a publication in public and in schools, and to see the reactions. We've really received a lot of support for our work which means a lot to us. Finally, since there's such an interest in peace work, there's hope that the potential ugly scenario will not happen in Vojvodina, hence that life with constant tension, lack of everyday communication among people with different ethnic identity, submission to political manipulations with ethnic background, moving population to the areas where they are the majority, etc. will not become a part of day-to-day life in Vojvodina.

### **The book «I cannot feel well if my neighbour does not»**

*Published in the second half of January 2006.*

#### **PROMOTIONS**

There were six promotions of the book, in the following cities: Skoplje, Sarajevo, Belgrade, Podgorica, Osijek and Gnjilane, that took place from the end of January to mid-February. We organized those in Belgrade and Sarajevo ourselves, while the promotions in other cities were organized by our collaborators.

Promotion in Skoplje was organized by the *First Children's Embassy "Međaši"* where we were presenting the book together with professor Ferid Muhić. About forty persons attended the event, most of them NGO activists together with some people who work in media and education. The media coverage of the promotion was quite well.



meaning of reconciliation in our region.

Promotion in Sarajevo didn't gather too many people, only about 15 showed up but we were surprised with the big media interest. Two state-owned TV stations, BHT1 and FTV reported from the promotion, and some of the most popular dailies ran information about it. The book was presented by our colleague, than our cooperation partner Anita Grabner from Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje who was one of the interviewers, and author and journalist from Sarajevo, Ivan Lovrenović. Very inspirational discussion that followed, revolved about the book, the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the

Even though we had expected only a few people would turn up at the Belgrade promotion (mostly acquaintances and those close to us) and an overall disinterest, it turned out that there were about forty people, 10 of which were from the media. A psychologist and politician from Belgrade, Vera Marković and director of the Centre for Cultural Decontamination, Borka Pavićević presented the book together with us. We were taken by surprise with the invitation from the producers of «Belgrade Chronicles», daytime programme of RTS (Serbian TV), to appear in the show and announce the promotion. As for the printed media, it seems that only the "Danas" daily published an article, which was no surprise.

Quite unexpectedly, but the promotion in Podgorica, Montenegro was a big hit, partly because the group of Montenegrin peace activists had done a great job organizing it, and we must especially mention the efforts of Lidija Zeković. The vice president of the Parliament of Montenegro, Rifat Rastoder, and representative of the Nansen Dialogue Centre, Ivana Gajović spoke at the promotion together with the organizers. The public library auditorium was full. There were about 90-100 persons in the audience, people with various professional background: NGO activists, "officials", people from the media, artists, etc. State-owned TV

channel reported from the event, and almost all the dailies ran articles about it. Local daily "Republika" has already started to publish interviews as a part of their feuilleton, and they will issue 29 out of total 47 of them.

Promotion in Osijek, Croatia was organized by the *Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights, Osijek (Centar za mir, nenasilje i ljudska prava Osijek -CZMOS)*. Professor Ladislav Bogнар and Velibor Zirojević from CZMOS, presented the book. According to his own words, professor Bogнар was deeply inspired by the book and he had prepared a Power Point presentation about it which was very colourful and motivating. Unfortunately, this promotion was the least attended. Maybe that's why the conversation with the audience looked more like a workshop held in a cosy atmosphere. We are not sorry for organizing it, at least for the people who came and to whom it really meant a lot.

The big hall of the "Kristal" Hotel in Gnjilane, Kosovo was packed with people. There were about 80 seats taken and a number of people remained standing. The promotion was organized by the Action against Violence and for Peace Building, Gnjilane (*Aksioni Kundër Dhunës dhe Ndërtimi i Paqës, ANP*). Besides us, there were Adem Demaçi and our friend and collaborator, Gazmend Murseli from ANP who gave speeches. Our friend Nexhat Ismaili was translating the discussions simultaneously. Book promotion was turned into a conference that lasted more than two and a half hours and there were a lot of people who wanted to continue conversations afterwards.

### ***Questions and Comments From the Audience***

It was difficult to talk with the audience because they didn't have a chance to read the book. Anyway, the title itself together with the fact that it was published in all the languages send a certain message. We will quote only a small part of what people asked or commented:

"And why aren't there any Slovenians?"

"Why doesn't the book include those noisy and aggressive ones, that's the reality, and this is some kind of illusion."

"Are women more willing to reconcile then men?"

"How did you choose people?"

"How do we know it's the truth?"

"Perhaps it's all manipulation, everything can be fixed up, you know what journalists are like."

"This book is fifty years late."

"We should work with the bullies, too."

### ***Where Can You Find the Book***

Belgrade: Centre for Nonviolent Action Belgrade Office ([cna.beograd@nenasilje.org](mailto:cna.beograd@nenasilje.org))

Sarajevo: Centre for Nonviolent Action Sarajevo Office ([cna.sarajevo@nenasilje.org](mailto:cna.sarajevo@nenasilje.org))

Skoplje: The First Children's Embassy "Međaši" ([gordanaz@childrensembassy.org.mk](mailto:gordanaz@childrensembassy.org.mk))

Gnjilane: ANP ([anp\\_kos@yahoo.com](mailto:anp_kos@yahoo.com))

Osijek: CZMOS ([katarina.kruhonja@os.htnet.hr](mailto:katarina.kruhonja@os.htnet.hr))

Podgorica: Please, contact Lidija Zeković ([lzekovic@gmail.com](mailto:lzekovic@gmail.com))

In case the «distributors» have already administered all the books, try finding them in major libraries in those cities. It is quite possible that our cooperation partners have already managed to deliver books to other libraries in bigger cities, throughout the country.

The book should have reached the main libraries in the following towns in Serbia: Aranđelovac, Aleksandrovac, Bačka Topola, Zemun, Belgrade, Bečej, Bor, Bujanovac, Valjevo, Vranje, Vrbas, Vršac, Gornji Milanovac, Zaječar, Zrenjanin, Indija, Jagodina, Kikinda, Kragujevac, Kraljevo, Kruševac, Leskovac, Ljig, Medveđa, Negotin, Niš, Novi Pazar, Novi sad, Pančevo, Pirot, Požarevac, Preševo, Priboj, Prijepolje, Prokuplje, Raška, Sjenica, Smederevo, Sombor, Sremska Mitrovica, Subotica, Užice, Čačak, Šabac, Šid and some others.

In case the library in the place where you live doesn't have the book, and you think it should, i.e. the book would have its readership, let us know so we can send copies before we give them all away.

## ***Libraries In Serbia***

At the end of February, we contacted many libraries in Serbia asking them if they were interested to receive a copy of the book titled «I cannot feel well if my neighbour does not» (with an accompanying description), as a gift. We made this enquiry in order to prevent the possibility of getting the book back from the library we had previously sent it to (as was the case with our manual «Nonviolence» in Hungarian while we were sending it to some schools). Reactions to our offer were positive and supporting: «It will be our pleasure to receive it» (Public library from Požarevac); "We also implement different projects, even from the area of human rights, and that book would sure come in handy " ("Vuk Karadžić" Library, Prijepolje); "We thank you for the offer and consider that the book will have its readers in Vlasotince and this region" (Public library, Vlasotince), etc.

## ***ANECDOTE FROM THE BORDERS AND ELSEWHERE***

One of the more complicated tasks we had to accomplish as the part the whole process was collecting information about all the paperwork needed to transport a certain number of books from Belgrade to Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Kosovo, without having to pay the custom tax (since the book is given as a present and cannot be sold). Obtaining the information was an impossible mission, because we were either given only bits and pieces of information or faced with impossible requirements. Finally, we decided to get on the road with the books and all the papers we had managed to obtain so far. The border between Serbia and Macedonia was the ice-breaker where the customs officer who was confused at first, consulted with her superior and said: «If things were going to get better because of this book, we would let the whole truck full of them pass". Customs officers in Macedonia asked us to park our car by the road, but it was more because they wanted to have a bit of chat with us, then to follow a formal procedure. One of them made a joke: «Look what Europe's doing, they will make us give up the old saying «An envious man waxes lean with the fatness of his neighbour. It says here he doesn't". We gave them each a copy, of course, because they were really interested, especially because of the fact that «there were all those different languages in it».

One of the customs officials said to us: "You really are multi-ethnic». We had to wait for the customs officers at the border between Kosovo, for about fifteen minutes, before they finished their dinner. They apologized to us over and over again for having to wait and thanked us for giving them copies of the book.

There were problems only at the border between Serbia and Montenegro because we had to pay custom tax (and quite a big amount, too). Montenegrin law (or at least how the customs officer interpreted it) did not prescribe the procedure for giving away books, but according to it, it is necessary to pay the tax when you import books, therefore the whole problem was about the interpretation of the law. Luckily a Montenegrin official came to our aid, otherwise we would bring the books back to Belgrade and cancel the promotion.

We should also mention that the communication with Montenegrin police was incredibly constructive and that the police officers were very sympathetic (even tried to convince the customs officer that she should let us pass).

Quite an amazing gesture that doesn't fit into the stereotyped image of the police is a letter we received from the director of the Police Directorate Of the Government of Montenegro (who was invited to attend the promotion). He thanked us for the invitation but had to excuse himself due to some other commitments.

Do we need to point out that there was no answer from the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights?

## 5. OTHER ACTIVITIES; ACTIVITIES OF OUR PARTNERS

### **Workshop in Wustrow, Germany** *October 24 - 31, 2005*

Meetings of peace activists who work on peace building in different parts of the world almost always bring along exchange of experiences, learning from others and a chance for self-reflection. Two people from CNA team had such a chance on the workshop organized by Kurwe that took place in Wustrow, from October 24 to 31. We worked with people from Germany, France, Palestine, East Timor and Macedonia.

While getting to know different contexts of post-conflict societies, through work with "foreigners" who are engaged in peace building, as well as with local peace activists, we had a chance to re-examine some of our approaches, think about other, different ways to work on peace building and to offer some of our "learning points" to the others and at the same time draw some parallels with our experiences and the context we came from.

The workshops' open concept offered an opportunity to initiate work on dealing with the past which is an important segment of peace work, as we see it. Throughout this workshop we gained insights on views of other peace activists that work on this process in Palestine and Israel, East Timor, Macedonia but also in France and Germany. We found it particularly interesting and quite endearing due to the strong personal touch. On the other hand, it seemed that working on this subject was particularly useful to people from Germany and France, on a certain level, because we all shared an impression that it was rarely discussed or worked on even though the past of those countries is "tidy" (especially from the point of view of peace building and with a wider social support). However, it would be quite valuable to examine in what ways those societies were dealing with the violence from the past and its consequences.

Based on what we heard, we are under the impression that the dominant discourse of treating the past in Palestine and Israel continues to be instrumentality of the past events in such a way so that it offers legitimacy and support to the image of the other as an enemy, thus supporting the violence in Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The very fact that the conflict continues leaves very little chance to treat the past in a constructive way and support de-escalation.

Situation in Eastern Timor and the attitude towards the past partly reminds us of the situation in the region of former Yugoslavia. The attempts of the United Nations' representatives to establish the Commission for Truth and Trust and the War Crimes Tribunal ended with the job only half-done. People from East Timor still carry a dominant feeling that "the justice hasn't been served" and therefore are unable to step out of the role of the victim. One can rarely see the readiness to acknowledge and openly condemn violence and crimes committed by "our own" people.

We made an agreement with people who work on peace education in Palestine to pay each other visits (they'll come to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia) so we can get a chance to learn from each other about possible approaches to peace education in different social contexts (both conflict and post-conflict ones). We consider that this may enrich our work greatly and refresh our approach to peace education with some new aspects and possibilities. Besides all this, the meeting motivated us in a slightly unusual way. Without an intention to be at least bit cynical, we think that stepping out of our everyday lives and realizing that our post-war surroundings are not the worst in the world, motivated us to think in terms of "we can do it!" instead of just "we must do it".

## **«Architecture of Peace»**

***Peace conference, Novi Sad, Vojvodina, November 9 -13, 2005***

The conference dedicated to war experiences and chances of building sustainable peace was held as a part of the gathering of psychology students of former Yugoslavia, at the University of Novi Sad. The assembly was organized by the Psychology Students' Club «traNSfer» and Centre for War Trauma, both from Novi Sad, who had invited members of CNA team to conduct a one-day workshop on the theme of "violence and peace building" as a part of the conference.

Concept of the conference was designed as a series of lectures, workshops and forums on different themes related to context of peace building and psycho-social processes and phenomena. Some of those themes were: *existentialistic view on post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), violence and peace building, workshop type of work with traumatized children, role of NGOs in peace building, social importance of the war crimes trials, contribution of war veterans to peace building, nationalism and ethnic stereotypes, (mis)use of religion for the purpose of dehumanizing the enemy, etc.*

Tamara Šmidling and Adnan Hasanbegović from CNA facilitated the workshop attended by fifteen people from the region. It was quite inspirational to discuss the themes of violence and peace building and problems related to the phenomenon such are nationalism, crime, discrimination and like. In their comments participants pointed out that the workshop was empowering and stimulating for them when it comes to more thorough reflection on activism and peace building.

We also took part officially in another activity. It was the forum on the theme of: *contribution of the war veterans to peace building* which included, among other speakers, two of our old friends and collaborators, war veterans Novica Kostić and Gordan Bodog.

Guests of the conference had a chance to see the documentary about the war veterans, «Traces» which was produced by CNA. After the film, there was the debate about it and the discussion with some of its protagonists, Marko Martinić, Nermin Karačić and Novica Kostić.

We share the general impression that the conference was useful and ample, offering participants an opportunity to hear and see plenty of interesting contents regarding the themes already mentioned. The importance of this event lies also, among other things, in that fact that it links the academic circles with the people, themes and activities related to peace building which is not usually the case with similar gatherings that are held in this region. This meeting gave a good example and underlined the importance of the engagement of students and professors in the field of peace work and making a link between theory and actual social activities. It seems important to mention that the atmosphere amongst the participants of the conference was affected by the incident at the anti-fascist forum that took place at the University of Novi Sad, on the first of the conference. An organized group of neo-fascists busted in obstructing the event with acts of violence and the police intervened. Unfortunately, it only emphasized the overall difficult situation of the societies in our region where strong, nationalistic structures and extreme political ideologies continue to uphold and the fact remains that there is really so much to be done when we speak about sustainable peace.

More details about the event are available from the organizers: Psychology Students' Club «traNSfer» (at [www.transfer.org.yu](http://www.transfer.org.yu)) and Centre for War Trauma (at [www.wartrauma.org.yu](http://www.wartrauma.org.yu)).

## **16 Days of Activism**

***Sarajevo, November 25 - December 10, 2005***

***Foundation CURE, Conscientious Objection, Q Association, ACIPS, QPSW...***

16 Days of Activism against gender/sexual violence is a global, international campaign that takes place every year between November 25 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) and December 10 (International Human Rights Day).

This year for the first time, we have participated actively in the organization of 16 Days of Activism in Sarajevo, together with the whole bunch of organizations, informal groups and individuals from Sarajevo (and elsewhere) with whom we're bonded by activist awareness and a desire to give this town and its streets a bit of a shake down and to stir up sleepy and apathetic conscious of its citizens.

During those 16 days various street actions, performances, concerts, workshops, plays, forums, and media appearances were achieved. Their main goal was to focus the public attention to the problems of violence against women, children, minorities, poor...

The action which was organized literally with the bare minimum of funds, lot of enthusiasm, and a desire to make some noise about things that are otherwise ignored and kept in, was sometimes lacking organization, coordination and clear vision about desired/possible results - still, the event that lasted for several days made



*activism* present, visible and loud in Sarajevo, on daily basis. Even if it was imperfect, often chaotic, left to the instantaneous individual inspiration - it would still be absolutely necessary for this society that was lacking the energy to *react* to anything at all (unless grumbling in front of a TV set is considered as some kind of reaction).

## **The «React!» Group**

**«Half a Month in Someone Else's Shoes»**

***Cities in Vojvodina, October - December, 2005***

It has been two years since the «React!» group was formed in Vojvodina. It came as a result of the need that not so few people from Vojvodina had to react to different forms of violence in their communities. Ethnic, religious and cultural violence that happens on daily basis everywhere around us, offers many reasons to constantly react, struggle, mark and publicly condemn which is exactly what the «React!» group does almost every day, through different actions, announcements, mailing lists and exchange of information. The presence and transparency that the group promulgates has done a lot for bringing some very important themes for public discussion (the attitude of the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Patriarch towards women, introduction of church-state tax for the building of the St. Sava church, neo-Nazis busting the anti-fascist forum in Novi Sad, etc.) in the territory of Vojvodina and elsewhere in Serbia. The group Good managed to provide good media coverage and support of their initiatives.

CNA supports the group's work from the very beginning (two CNA team members were among the founders) by participating in their actions, both with our resources and financially, according to our capacities. In the beginning the group gathered just about ten people who attended some of CNA training events, but in the meantime it has grown and spread out to several cities in Vojvodina (thanks to communication over the mailing-list) mainly due to a very dedicated and motivated work of the people who make the core of the group. It's not unimportant that the group operates on the voluntary basis, without fees and with minimum of funds that are provided by the people who engage their own capacities, from small donations CNA managed to provide and from donations of some institutions from Vojvodina. Such an approach to work on problems that starts from recognising the problem through thinking about ways to stand up and act, all the way to coming out bravely and acting has unfortunately rarely been present here. The Group's primarily activist component is very important and it is far more than just "let's work and make waves", but more of a "let's work on projects now, when there's a deficit of activist awareness in an ever increasing ocean of professional dealing with problems which has become so obvious and pressing".

In the last three months of 2005, they organized many actions under the common title "Half a Month in Someone Else's Shoes" which were concentrated on inter-ethnic relations in Vojvodina. Novi Sad, Zrenjanin, Pančevo, Kikinda, Novi Bečej, Bačka Palanka were just some of the towns where the activities took place in the form of round tables, forums, painting over graffiti, broadcasting radio jingles, distributing leaflets, creating web-site and street actions and there were over 40 of them implemented. CNA financially supported some of them. Here are some of the examples:

#### **ZRENJANIN**

November 28 - Forum on peace activism and the screening of the documentary «Traces»

November 30 - Performance "Red Card for Bullies"

December 6 - Street activity and forum about discrimination of people in wheel-chairs.

December 10 - Standing on the square carrying posters about human rights and going to Novi Sad to a Peace march.

December 14 - : Forum: "Men and Feminism"

#### **PANCEVO**

December 5 - Promotion of volunteerism and the action "In Someone Else's Shoes" about the way people in wheel-chair and deaf-mute people communicate in public spaces

December 7 - Religious Minorities' Day

December 14 - Street action of promoting cooperation between young people and local municipalities

#### **BACKA PALANKA**

December 1-8 - Polling high-school students on "What is tolerance?"

December 10 - Round table: "Can We Live Together under Vojvodina's Roof and How?"

#### **NOVI SAD**

December 9 - Round table: "Can We Live Together under Vojvodina's Roof and How?"

#### **NOVI BECEJ**

December 5 - Promotion of volunteerism through distribution of promotional material and forum (Volunteerism - Necessities and Needs)

December 10 - Street action: "High Noon - It's time", support to the campaigns: "For life Without Violence" and "16 Days of Activism"

December 11 - Performance: "Different, so what!"

December 17-18 - Two-day seminar on public advocacy of marginalised groups

We are very much encouraged with the readiness and motivation of these people to publicly and loudly speak against violence and for promotion of values like understanding, differences, solidarity and social justice. It is often neither easy nor harmless and it requires a lot of courage and mutual support. Time that these activists invest in better future of all of us is worth our admiration, support and joining, especially since we spent our lives in a constant struggle to provide for a bare existence, due to the process of social, economic and cultural transition that we live in.

## **6. ARTICLES - PERSONAL VIEWS**

### **„I think I Believe“- 40 %**

*by Nenad Vukosavljevic*

For years, public opinion polls in Serbia have been showing that the church and the army are two most appreciated institutions of this country. The facts are that some priests even posed in front of the camera with the arms in their hands during the war (father Filaret) and that the members of the notorious Scorpio squad who executed civilians in Srebrenica were receiving blessings from the priest of the Serbian Orthodox Church (SOC), video recording of which was shown in the Hague Tribunal for war crimes. Still, none of it diminished Serb's trust in SOC.

Here are the results of the opinion polls conducted by Faktor Plus agency, and published in Politika Daily newspaper, which offered some interesting results:

When asked «Do you believe in God? », 21.4% answered: «YES», 38.6% answered: «NO» while 40% responded with: «I think I believe».

The following answers were given to the question «What is religion to you?»: «Deep faith in God» (5.6%), «Deception of people» (8.7%), «Don't know» (21.5%), «Belonging to the group, nation» (24.9%), «Tradition» (39.3%).

The activity of SOC in Serbian society shows a tendency of increased aggressiveness, aspirations to take over the undisputable role above the civil system of authority, with the right to influence, make decisions and to judge, moralize, and impose even the decisions that are strictly within the jurisdiction of the authorities, from its outward position with respect to the democratic system.

Current authorities not only fail to resist to such course but offer their cordial support to the attempts of its establishment by accepting assistance of church dignitaries when making important decisions concerning the state, and above all by silently accepting the imposed system of social values, as a legitimate choice of democratic society. Consulting church delegation about defining a strategy for the upcoming negotiations regarding the status of Kosovo might even be considered acceptable, because of the big Church's property situated in Kosovo. However, it is really shocking that one of the members of the SOC delegation is a priest accused of paedophilia who persistently avoids facing the trial, often using health problems as an excuse.

Since the SOC does not consider that they should remove the priest in question from its position, it tells a lot about the hypocrisy of the institution that advertises its right to be the highest moral authority of all Serbs. Absence of reactions from the authorities that are so close to the SOC testifies in their behalf.

The authorities remain silent when it comes to connections between pro-fascist groups and SOC, while the church does not renounce its "loyal congregation" even in those cases when they publicly promulgate hate, propagate ethnically inspired intolerance, make death threats, etc. Although, the authorities were forced to act against one of such groups after the incident provoked at an anti-fascist forum in Novi Sad, but the ruling coalition's leading party, Democratic Party of Serbia does not consider that it needs to distance itself from similar clero-fascist organizations like OBRAZ, for example.

SOC's standpoint on equality of women would be really funny if its background didn't contain an obvious hatred towards women and an affirmation of belief that they were less worthy beings than men. SOC feels invited to hand pass on their views concerning women's clothes, and for example admits that it is justified for women to wear trousers in cases "when travelling on a horse, in winter". Women are not welcome in church during their monthly cycle because they are "impure". These examples do not come from church documents declared in the middle Ages - they represent current situation of Serbia. Opposing women's rights to decide about their pregnancy, that results from the proclaimed goal of breeding Serbian people, whereas the woman is a mean of carrying out all the above mentioned, is also worth mentioning.

It is worth mentioning the example of former Serbian minister of education (member of Democratic Party of Serbia), luckily no longer in the office, who announced the introduction of creationist theory in school syllabus alongside with the Darwin's evolution theory. Her 'revolutionary' initiative which pleased SOC was halted by the reactions of the appalled public, therefore leaving the pluralism of science incomplete, while the lady was dismissed from her position that never should have held in the first place. Enough is enough, even though unfortunately the line that marks tolerance in Serbia is quite winding.

The SOC plays an important role in Montenegro in the situation where political relations are overheated and there are conflicts between those in favour of independence and supporters of the State union with Serbia. Montenegrin Orthodox Church (which has been declared several years ago and is discretely supported by the Montenegrin authorities that aspire to independence of Montenegro) exists alongside SOC in Montenegro. Unfortunately, SOC and its major advocate in Montenegro, father Amfilohije Radović are deeply into politics and seem to consider it's their duty to protect people in Montenegro from the decisions they might make with they own free will. Erecting a steel "prefabricated church" on the Rumija hill nearby Bar

with the help of the Army of Serbia and Montenegro and its chopper is an example of the action that caused additional public stir-up in Montenegro. The Rumija hill carries a tradition of being a gathering-point of people with different religious identities, therefore this act was rightly perceived as an attack on multi-ethnic relations in Montenegro that do seem to be fragile, but no serious incidents have happened so far. Amfilohije has a reputation for being one of the most influential priests in church hierarchy. In the past he was subject of numerous newspapers articles thanks to his unrestrained entrepreneurial talent that guided him into building a fish pond in the vicinity of the monastery and endangering the appearance of a cultural asset that descend from the Middle Age, which is protected by the law. The same person engaged in a successful trade operation with the National Bank of Serbia by selling the copyright to the famous fresco of White Angel from the Mileševa monastery. The White Angel really is a master piece of medieval fresco painting and indisputably Serbian contribution to the cultural heritage of the world, but why do they charge it to the same people who can now watch the picture they are so proud of on their credit cards?

The government stimulated church entrepreneurship by supporting the building of the St. Sava Church in Belgrade with the introduction of yet another tax - additional postage stamp that is obligatory for every piece of mail in domestic traffic. Perhaps there would be no object to such decision if the government expressed such concern for the cultural assets of religious communities in the cases of burned mosques in Belgrade and Niš, that were destroyed during the demonstrations in March 2004, when Serbs and SOC were attacked in Kosovo. If that was the right way to implement activities that are useful for the society, why wouldn't they intervene in case of refugees from Kosovo who needed help?

The relationship between SOC and the Macedonian Orthodox Church is another issue that burdens relations between Serbia and Macedonia and its citizens that are otherwise quite well. The process started almost 40 years ago when the MOC was formed. According to the rules of the orthodox churches, newly formed church will become autocephalous only if it gets an approval from the church from which it is being separated from. It is different to understand reasons why SOC still isn't ready to acknowledge the autocephalous status of MOC, but in Macedonia it is certainly perceived as underestimating and humiliating of MOC which many Macedonians considered as a pillar of their ethnic identity. MOC and Macedonian authorities responded by prohibiting SOC to act in Macedonia even though there's a registered Serb minority there, and by banning Serbian priests to enter Macedonia, all of which had its culmination in a court trial against the Macedonian priest, who was accused of corruption, appointed by SOC and given an eparchy - which is a step towards autocephaly, according to the SOC. The answer to something that is perceived as violence is also violence, while the carriers of this process are those who represent the religion that promotes love for people, in the first place. Representatives of the authorities are also included in the dispute and they tried to at least partially restrict the damage caused by the deterioration of relations. There were also some actions aiming in the direction towards intensifying the dispute, like in the case of the distinguished minister of capital investments in the Serbian Government, V. Ilić, M.Sc., (recently defended his master's dissertation, in front people who are the members of the party he is a president of). As an act of revenge, he withdrew two aircrafts belonging to Yugoslav Airlines that had been previously rented to the Macedonian airline company! The minister in question who gladly poses by the priests' side and declares himself as a great believer, despite the numerous scandals that he's involved in, as for example physical assault on the reporter, connections with financial tycoons, is highly rated on the list of Serbian top politicians.

If 40% of people in Serbia "think that they believe in God" while 2/3 see religion as "belonging to nation" or "tradition" it is quite clear that people are confused and that they identify religion with belonging to the ethnic group, which is a part of their identity, therefore with church as a interpreter of appropriateness of living the faith and values that Christianity preaches. According to this, the institution of SOC is experienced as the untouchable, therefore the criticism towards the institution of SOC and those who practice it are perceived as acts of hostility against the entire Serbian people. Of course it easier for SOC to accuse someone for sinfulness and treachery of Serbian people than to answer why a person who is accused of paedophilia is one of its distinguished members or what's the connection between its priests and racist and anti-Semitic groups that openly call upon attacks on those who do not share their opinions.

The actual government notably helped creating the image of the SOC and its officials as flawless ones, but that image was also supported by many others who create public opinion. Is it really possible that there aren't journalist, academics, and well-known businessmen among those who "think that they believe"? When the Patriarch of the SOC, Paul, sent love, peace and justice to all people, regardless of their religion in one of his Christmas Messages, or on some other occasion, I would undoubtedly, do the same. It would be very good though if that was put into effect, starting from their own ranks. At first, by condemning those who advertise hatred and intolerance, and declare themselves as "orthodox believers". And then, perhaps, by changing the hierarchical system of total control that for example does not allow the priests to express their opinion in public, without previously getting a permit from their superior. Why is SOC afraid of television appearance and public display of the opinion of one of its priests who speaks in favour of coexistence in Slavonia and offers their own spokesman instead? What's with all the seclusion, why run away from one's own part of the responsibility for the evil that has been happening to us in the past 15 years? So help us God.

## **NATO and us?**

*by Milan Colic Humljan*

If Serbia (I'm not sure if it's still appropriate to use the term State Union Serbia and Montenegro, because it is everything but a Union) doesn't extradite The Hague Tribunal indictees, its chances for admission to Euro-Atlantic integrations will be stopped, questioned and revised.

We hear various formulations of this sentence at least couple of times per day.

Somehow, conditions for negotiating these integrations are clear to everyone, and even right wing oriented politicians state that this is something Serbia needs to do if it desires "brighter future".

However, meaning of the term "Euro-Atlantic integrations" is never questioned. It implies something good, European, cultural, prosperous, employed, and secure.

But is it really the symbol of well being that awaits us? The term of "Euro-Atlantic integrations" was set up as cohesion of the words *European* (relates to establishment of EU as an integral region) and *Atlantic* (relates to Atlantic pact, I.E. NATO).

First, we need to know that joining, i.e. affiliation to NATO pact IS NOT a condition for joining European Union., There are countries within EU such as Austria, Sweden, Finland and Ireland that are not NATO members. Designated European constitution doesn't associate NATO membership with joining EU. Regardless of that fact, from day-to-day we hear this term as a whole that cannot be divided. Serbia (along with other countries in the region) is an aspirant for joining the EU. Although we can argue against the very hypothesis of poor countries joining the EU within the context of economic globalization, market competitiveness that small and economically weak countries cannot withstand, cheap labor and resource exploitation; main concern of this text are fabrications and semi-truths used as argumentation for Serbia to join the NATO pact.

### **What is NATO and what is it's purpose?**

NATO is a military alliance of the USA, Canada and 24 European countries. It was founded in 1949 to protect the capitalist West from Soviet Union and its socialist model. Eastern bloc fell apart in 1989, and reasons for NATO existence had vanished. However, instead of completion, the alliance established new goals and tasks. In objective absence of "the enemy", required for creating balance in production of modern weaponry, NATO turned to the tales of terrorism in order to justify the reasons of its existence (and the massive budget available to it). "Protection of attainments of the developed West against increasing terrorism" becomes one of its main arguments. Interestingly, threat of terrorist attacks and number of terrorist actions in NATO member countries rise in parallel with the new doctrine. It is hard not to notice that number of these actions has multiplied in the last years, I.E. since NATO determined to defend us from such. Somebody could conclude that NATO needs terrorist attacks?

It is at least questionable whether the security provided by hundreds of aircrafts, thousands of tanks, military ships and nuclear weapons could stop an organized group (of ten people, for

example) ready to sacrifice their own lives entering the metro or train stations with bags full of explosives. Seems that F117A aircraft cannot decrease this danger.

In its new strategic concept, enacted in 1999 and 2000, NATO assigned itself the right to undertake military interventions by its own judgment in conflicts outside the territory of member countries. This concept allows NATO to intervene without the permission of UN in emergencies that could "jeopardize the security" of alliance member countries. Hence, NATO assigned itself the right to use nuclear weapons. New concept implies military interventions anywhere in the world where NATO member countries and particularly USA seek to protect or strengthen their interests. Endangered American interests (mostly economic ones) are presented as a global threat. Governments of other powerful NATO countries don't have aversion towards this concept; they rather embrace it and take part in it. The very same "threats to democracy" targeted by NATO, came out of regimes set up and maintained by America, in order to ensure its dominance on their grounds. I suppose it is not too much to assume that realization of certain plans is long lasting and gradual?

n We can hear rather often that reasons for NATO expansion is to establish values such as democracy and human rights protection in transition countries. However, most likely main reason is increase of political and economical influence of the USA over these countries. With NATO's assistance American corporations and multinational companies gain large economical influence over undeveloped countries.

NATO expansion is a very profitable business for its members - 80% of world's weaponry production is owned by the wealthiest NATO members. Requests to meet "NATO standards" in terms of weaponry and military hardware guarantees weapon sales to the new members.

#### **What else citizens don't know?**

There is almost no public discourse (dis)advantages regarding Serbia's potential membership in this pact. Whole public and media space that in any regard deals with military, security, safety or peace building issues seems either to be in favor of membership or doesn't have a standpoint on the issue. It seems that in those circles notion of "Euro-Atlantic" integrations is well accepted as distinctive and appropriate. Therefore citizens of Serbia don't have an opportunity to get the information about what does it mean for Serbia and themselves as taxpayers to join this pact. They don't know that:

- Investments in the army directly subtract funds from social security, health care, education, culture, environmental protection... NATO membership fee is very costly, but it is not the only item to pay. Military reorganization costs, weapon and military hardware purchase in order to meet "NATO standards", participation of the army in interventions outside the state, communication system adaptation costs, adaptation of roads, railways, airports and harbors by NATO dictates. For example, NATO has just dictated Slovenia to "get rid of the tanks made under Russian license" and to buy armor plated transporters (265 million EUR financed by citizens), while Bulgaria has to buy new Italian transport aircrafts (91 million EUR) instead Russian ones they already possess.
- Dangerous weapons and various toxic materials, including nuclear weapons are stored in military bases; therefore military bases are constant threat to environment and human health.

However, one delusion is omnipresent - by joining NATO Serbian industry will start to produce technical and military equipment by highest quality standards, and it will increase the export and quantity of available working positions. This is untrue because only the USA and few other large and wealthy countries dictate trade of their own military and technical equipment mandatory to all NATO members. Besides, does the increase of working positions justify the fact that our export products could be weapons with purpose that we don't have to guess? "Aims justify the means" is the logic of liberal capitalism, where profit is the essence not liable to ethical analysis, where the origin of money doesn't have almost any influence. This fits very well into the military logic promoted by NATO; therefore production of weapons to be used for murder of "some Africans or people from Middle East" becomes desirable industry that will "bring progress to our society". Lack of consciousness that "over there" is very similar to "over here" and that it also affects our lives, is very convenient to NATO in dehumanization of those it plans to get into battle with or is already doing so.

Even though 75% of Serbian population has negative opinion of NATO (mostly influenced by illegal bombing of SCG), most of them are not familiar with alternatives to joining the pact.

There was no research in Serbia aiming to offer arrangements focused on alternatives neither for the country itself nor for the region.

Security and safety issues are analyzed purely through military doctrines, firmly connected to terms such as "defense from the enemy". Therefore, army has the exclusive right to tackle these issues. Even though part of the military structures is not supportive of initiatives to join NATO (for reasons not even close to those stated above), they see possibilities to secure increased budget and their further existence along with better equipment. Even though their own military/safety analyses indicate certainty that there will be no new wars in the region, they do not question security that they offer, or the budget increase which should ensure army transformation according to NATO standards. Future military operations may be conceived only as helpers of US "world cops", who act in order to secure their economic and political hegemony.

So, what does this military transformation bring except the increase of amount of money that taxpayers will have to pay in order to support American "interventions" and "campaigns" similar to the "campaign" carried out in Serbia in 1999?

Citizens' notion of peace, safety and security cannot be gained by purchasing and collecting new and modern weapons. For example, purchase of better military aircrafts doesn't generate the notion of safety, but rather creates the same necessity in other countries, especially those in the neighborhood. Notion of safety is not generated by having better and stronger weapons than your neighbor, but by knowing that your neighbor doesn't want to attack or kill you.

#### **How do we achieve this and what are the alternatives?**

Country's own state politics determine the extent of citizens' safety, as well as the safety of the whole community. Politics relying on dialogue, culture of peace, communication and cooperation with neighboring countries are the best possible and only realistic way of generating peace and the sense of safety. Issues such as building sustainable peace, demilitarization and safety cannot be seen nor treated locally. It is a process that has to last continuously in the whole region, and beyond, on international level. The fact that countries in our neighborhood follow the path that has been offered, and even imposed, doesn't mean that alternatives don't exist.

Serbia could give a priceless contribution to peace in the region by setting its own example, by choosing the path of demilitarization and building communication and trust with neighboring countries. It is quite certain that EU would not stand against such Serbian politics, nor could it justify opposition to them to its publicity.

Trustbuilding with neighbors takes lots of time, courage and patience. It demands getting to know the neighbors, realizing what is important to them, what scares them, what makes them feel safe. It takes a mutual exchange and effort by both sides. It would take lots of work, discussing painful issues, dealing with the past, discussing the future and lots of time and money to unwind such process in this region. It is a difficult path, but the question is: do we have a choice if in the future we want to feel good and safe about where we live?

Demilitarization as a method is not discussed in Serbia (or the region). This process should take place gradually, in the period of several years. It shouldn't imply overnight firing immense number of people employed in the army, but on the contrary, funds collected through gradual abolishment of the army should be used to re-qualify them, and in longer terms those funds should be used for educational programs and revitalization of the economy. Many military facilities can be transformed into civilian or be privatized. Large amounts of military assets can be used in various, profitable purposes.

Some countries already move into direction of demilitarization. Currently, various researches are taking place in Europe, analyzing best and painless ways to shift this process. With some competence, money and ideas such studies could also be made for this region.

#### **Referendum?**

The possibility of referendum in Serbia about joining the NATO remains unmentioned recently. Perhaps the referendum is planned, but under which circumstances? Are conditions for such referendum fair, if there is no public debate, if information about what joining the

NATO means are poorly and unifily presented as it is the case. Campaign FOR NATO will be very well financed (actually it has started a while ago). Whose task is it - to present other side of the story? It would only be fair that those elected to run this country try to do it. People trusted them to govern the state in their name. Unfortunately, very same politicians are major promoters of joining the NATO.

Most Non governmental organizations stand aligned with them, recognizing Atlantic integrations as a way towards "strengthening of democracy and human rights protection". Such standpoint towards Serbian and regional future is denominated as progressive, European, democratic, and very often it is presented as opposition to "regressive, national oriented" part of our reality. This is indisputably influenced by fact that most of national-chauvinist groups, including parties of Slobodan Milosevic and Vojislav Seselj stand against NATO membership of Serbia. However, the fact that reasons against joining this military alliance, other than those represented by right wing options (strong Serbian army, military alliance with Russia, regional domination) can be based on other values, such as antimilitarism, building sustainable peace, solidarity and non-violence politics very often remain undetected. Unfortunately, representatives of "progressive thinking" fail to conduct essential revisions, studies and research. The lacks of courage is visible in times when most of these "projects for enhancing democracy" are financed by governments of NATO member countries.

## **Croatian Democracy**

*by Sanja Deankovic*

I was inspired to write this article after visiting my home town of Split in order to make arrangements for the presentation of our documentary "Traces", at the end of last December.

While I was talking to people I realized I had a desire and motive to make a promotion of such film that demystified former enemies in a different way than it was usual and depicted people who had experienced the war on different sides, who draw strength from that experience to fight discrimination in their societies and who were ready to talk about their own and the responsibility of the side they belonged to, with criticism. I heard also that some feared that this peace activity - film promotion might attract former combatants of the homeland war, whose violent activities re-emerged due to then recent arrest of the "Croatian hero", Ante Gotovina.

All that made me really sad, especially when I look at the current social context.

Croatia is a serious candidate for joining the European Union. It met (according to some parliamentary and media sources) the main requirement for becoming a member of so called "European elite" - general Ante Gotovina was apprehended and extradited to the Hague Tribunal, a whole bunch of laws were adopted and adjusted to the European standards, but is that enough?

Can we say that any country is democratic if its parliament is used to promulgate and subtly calls upon lynch of opponents, because they publicly present slightly different picture about the homeland war and the "father of the homeland" than the one that has been created over the past 15 years?

The best example for that is a public campaign against Croatian TV host, Denis Latin, launched after he had criticized life and work of the "Croatian sanctity" - Franjo Tudjman in one of his talk-shows "Latinica". Reactions to the show that came from the Parliament's comfort zone and from leading people of Croatian Democratic Union seemed to gave an alarm signal to the veterans of war to start threatening with violence and death to all those who disagree, thus turning the focus of veteran's rage from those who had had Gotovina arrested to the TV crew of a talk show that became the most notorious fact of Croatian socio-political life.

It is obvious that the biggest crime in our society is talking about the crime in the first place and trying to change the paradigm of "us who were fighting the powerful, armed aggressor with our own bare hands".

It is really nice to live in a bewitched world where most media are servants of current politics that encourages the culture of denial and selective memory, only Croatian victims are remembered and no one else's and all crimes are criticized and condemned but those

committed by our own people. Predominant discussion about the homeland war is still in terms of a fairytale and includes covering-up some important dimensions of Croatian part in it, because it makes it easier to manipulate the citizens and remain longer on the positions of power.

Therefore, the biggest enemies of the state are those who speak or write about: the crimes committed in Prison Camp Lora, executions of people in Slavonia carried out under the rule of Branimir Glavas, killings committed after the Operation Storm or the people who were exposed to different forms of violence just because of their name. The reaction to violence is usually "strong protest" of the Government of the Republic of Croatia, while violence itself regularly remains unsanctioned and the "culture of fear" continues to dominate the public while being supported by the majority of structures of our society.

Judging by the reaction of Zarko Puhovski, the president of the Croatian Helsinki Committee, not even they care equally for everybody's human rights. In the case of death threats to the host of the talk-show "Latinica", Puhovski expressed some sort of critic's review regarding the quality of the show. While reading his reaction I got the impression that in that case, priority was given to one's own hostility towards certain persons over basic denial of their right to live. I'm afraid that each time such message is sent to the public, reactions against denying rights and freedoms of other people remain just unconvincing stories that substantiate all those who divide people according to how much right they have to claim their own human rights.

The Catholic Church - so called "moral vertical" of Croatian society, informs us by means of its bishop's conference to practice abstinence from pre-marital sex through prayer.

I mention this simply because never before we could hear the church call upon abstinence, in case of thefts, manipulations, murder threats to the opponents, frightening the unsuitable ones and the other deadly sins.

However, condemnation of war crimes and violence against political opponents doesn't seem to be in its jurisdiction.

I have an ever growing impression that not even the church officials try too hard to abstain from favouring one nation/religion to the detriment of the other, by means of prayer, which is opposite from the teachings of Jesus, who all of them whole- heartedly quote.

Finally, it is my impression that Croatia is so close to the European Union, while its citizens are, supported by all the structures, miles away from even the basic human solidarity towards people of different ethnicity who are not majority of this society. That is one of the main preconditions for self-critical reflection of the past. Calling the crime and carriers of the criminal politics by their real name remains on the level of incident. Not to mention eventual civil uprising and actions and pointing out to political decay ...

And at the end of this article, I quote Mladen Badovinac, member of Split rock band TBF. In one of his interviews he said: "let's go ahead, for real, with the rock' n' roll message: it's all shit, but it must get better! Let's do what we have to do, to make it that way".

So, let's do it!

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