

Cultures of Remembrance in the Balkans and Germany

“Horror Always Has the Same Face”

Documentation

Workshop and Study Tour in Berlin

with War Veterans from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia

October 2012

Martina Fischer

Miriam Schroer-Hippel

Cultures of Remembrance in the Balkans and Germany

“Horror Always Has the Same face”

**Documentation of a Workshop and Study Tour
in Berlin
with War Veterans from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia**

October 2012

By Martina Fischer and Miriam Schroer-Hippel

(Language editing: Pauline Bugler)



Centar za nenasilnu akciju
Centre for Nonviolent Action

CENTAR ZA NENASILNU AKCIJU

Office in Belgrade

Čika Ljubina 6, 11000 Beograd, Srbija

cna.beograd@nenasilje.org

Office in Sarajevo

Kranjčevićeva 33, 71000 Sarajevo, Bosna i Hercegovina

cna.sarajevo@nenasilje.org

Photos:

Nedžad Horozović

Nenad Vukosavljević

Cover design:

Nenad Vukosavljević

Layout:

Katarina Milićević

CNA:

Adnan Hasanbegović

Amer Delić

Nedžad Horozović

Nenad Vukosavljević

Content

- 1. Introduction 4**
- 2. The Workshop “Dealing with the Past for a Nonviolent Future – War Veterans for Peace. Experiences from the Balkans and Germany”, October 18th, 2012, Berghof Foundation**
 - 2.1. Welcome and introduction: Challenges for dealing with the past and the potential of war veterans: Martina Fischer (Berghof Foundation) and Nenad Vukosavljević (Centre for Nonviolent Action) 5**
 - 2.2. Daniel Gaede (Buchenwald Memorial Foundation): How to cope with all of these memories (!) Who engaged in remembrance policies in Germany – and why? 7**
 - 2.3. Adnan Hasanbegović and Nenad Vukosavljević: CNA’s activities with ex-combatants: Listening to each other’s narrative and marking sites of remembrance 11**
 - 2.4. Avdija Banda, Ivo Anđelović, Ljuban Volaš, Mirko Zečević Tadić, Muhamed Azabagić, Novica Kostić, Ibrahim Topčić, Narcis Mišanović: War Veterans’ motivations for peace-building and impressions from the study tour 15**
 - 2.5. Martina Fischer: Summary and further perspectives 23**
 - 2.6. List of Participants 25**
- 3. Studying Memorials to the Holocaust and Totalitarian Regimes: Discussions and impressions**
 - 3.1. Visiting memorial sites and cultural forms of remembrance 27**
 - 3.2. Feedback and reflection 35**

1. Introduction

War-torn societies face a crucial question and challenge: How to find words, gestures, sites, and forms of commemoration that explain the past in an appropriate manner and give guidance for building a shared future without repeating the pain? Peace practitioners and scholars are convinced that there is a need to face the legacies of the violent past to pave the way for peaceful co-existence, trust- and relationship building. At the same time, public presentation of history is often a source of conflict. Different interests and perspectives are involved and need to be addressed. To discuss these questions, the Centre for Nonviolent Action (CNA, Belgrade/Sarajevo) conducted a study tour to Berlin (Germany) with war veterans from the region of former Yugoslavia from October 15th-21st, 2012.

Eleven ex-combatants from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia travelled to Berlin. All of them waged war in Bosnia in the 1990s and fought against each other on opposing sides. These former enemies are now promoting peace. Working under the most difficult conditions, they visit sites of atrocities in local communities in Bosnia and initiate discussions with inhabitants and authorities. Many places in Bosnia are still unmarked and others are marked by monuments that raise controversy. The group aims to convince and sensitise their fellow-citizens that the sites have to be marked in a way that creates empathy for the suffering of the victims of all sides.

(For more information on the activities of the war veterans and CNA see www.nenasilje.org and www.berghof-conflictresearch.org/documents/publications/daytone_fischerm_cna.pdf)

The aim of the tour to Berlin was to explore how Germany has dealt with its past and whether this can inspire the reconciliation process in the Balkans. The group visited memorial sites selected by the CNA-team during an earlier visit in March 2012: They included the “Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe”, the “Topography of Terror”, which is a memorial to the planning hub of the Nazi police institutions and former prison in the centre of Berlin, the memorial site of the

former GDR-Prison “Gedenkstätte Hohenschönhausen”, the memorial and museum of the former concentration camp and war prison “Sachsenhausen”, and the Brandenburg Police School in the same neighbourhood. The visit also included talks with civil society initiatives for documenting local and oral history (Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt) and artistic forms of remembering exclusion, persecution, and deportation of the Jewish inhabitants of Berlin (established i.e. in the former Jewish quarter “Spandauer Vorstadt” and in the so-called “Bavarian Quarter”). (For a complete overview see <http://nenasilje.org/en/2012/the-heritage-of-national-socialism-the-culture-of-remembrance-in-berlin/>).

In addition to the study tour, the participants met for a workshop hosted by the Berghof Foundation on October 18th, 2012. The event offered space for deepening discussion with German experts, friends and supporters of CNA’s activities, and for reflecting on impressions from the visits to the memorials. The event was chaired by Martina Fischer (Berghof Foundation) and Nenad Vukosavljević (CNA). Two inputs informed the debate: Daniel Gaede, Director of the Educational Department at the Buchenwald Memorial Foundation, presented examples from the many German histories after 1945: Who became active in “remembrance policy” and how did these actors engage? What were the conditions for success? He highlighted the potential and limits of action on diverse (personal, social and state) levels and showed that dealing with the past is not a linear process. Adnan Hasanbegović and Nenad Vukosavljević presented the Centre for Nonviolent Action’s approach and how it supports ex-combatants’ efforts to achieve an inclusive culture of remembrance. War veterans explained their personal motivations and discussed their impressions from Berlin with friends and supporters of CNA and staff members of the Berghof Foundation. The Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) financed the tour and the workshop.

The following documentation highlights some of the most important moments and discussions.

2. The Workshop “Dealing with the Past for a Nonviolent Future – War Veterans for Peace. Experiences from the Balkans and Germany”

October 18th, 2012, at the Berghof Foundation

2.1. Welcome and introduction:

Challenges for dealing with the past and the potential of war veterans

Martina Fischer (Berghof Foundation) and Nenad Vukosavljević (CNA-Belgrade)

Martina Fischer

Dobar dan, dobrodošli – a warm welcome to our guests from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia who have now spent three days in Berlin, visiting memorial sites and museums. Good afternoon also to the friends and supporters of CNA, including my colleagues from the Berghof Foundation. A special welcome goes to Daniel Gaede who came from Weimar and will share his experiences from the Buchenwald Memorial Foundation. I am glad that so many people are able to join us today for this workshop that will look at experiences from the Balkans and Germany in the very complex field of “dealing with the past”.

The Berghof Foundation can look back to almost 15 years of co-operation with the Centre for Nonviolent Action now. Our joint activities include various evaluations, book publications, and workshops. Some of us have also followed the activities that have been conducted by war veterans and CNA in Bosnia and Serbia through reports, documentaries, and website galleries. Your approach is based on exchange of personal stories and experiences, and this is a very important way to address these issues. It is impressive how these activities further developed, thanks to the high commitment of the ex-combatants involved and also thanks to the energy and sensitivity of the CNA team. It is a great honour for us to have you here today.

When CNA developed the idea of organising a study visit for war veterans to see memorial sites in Berlin, I was excited about this and it was clear from the very first moment that I would support this project. I also want to express my gratitude towards the German Ministry for Development and Co-operation for funding

the trip – so special thanks go to Eckhard Volkmann, who is with us today.

However, when CNA asked me for advice on the question which memorial sites should be included in such a visit tour, two concerns and further questions came to my mind:

(1) Policies of remembrance in Germany are so complex and there exist so many layers:

Germany has faced many different challenges after World War II:

- Coming to terms with the violent history of the 3. Reich and responsibility for the Holocaust (reconciliation with the victims of the Holocaust and Israel)
- Reconciliation with all the nations that suffered from German militarism and World War II, and in particular the neighbours in Eastern and Western Europe
- Coming to terms with human rights violations committed in the former German Democratic Republic
- Integration and reconciliation of the two formerly divided societies and different experiences made in the period from the 1960s to the 1990s

Even if we only look at policies of remembrance of World War II, the Nazi-Regime and the Holocaust, we must admit that these developments were explained and remembered in many different ways in the two German states. And I asked myself: How to explain all this to people from the region of former Yugoslavia?

And there was a second concern, as I started wondering:

(2) How can you apply experiences made in Germany

to former Yugoslavia where war has destroyed many people's lives, trust and relationships?

The setting in the Balkans is highly complicated and also quite different from the German context, and I was not sure whether it will be possible to transfer German experiences to a place like Bosnia-Herzegovina that suffers from political stagnation, on-going ethno-political tensions, frozen conflicts and parallel societies, where the Dayton Peace Agreement has contributed to certain degree of stabilisation but, at the same time to fostering segregation, and different constituencies continue to meet each other with suspicion. At the same time, the ongoing conflicts are very much determined by the way(s) that people remember and interpret past events, and by different notions of victimhood.

From my own studies, I know that processes of facing the past cannot simply be transferred from one historical or regional situation to another but must develop out of specific contexts and in accordance with given cultures and societal dynamics. There are

Nenad Vukosavljević

I would like to welcome you all on behalf of CNA as well and I want to thank Martina and Berghof for having us here and for the hospitality and interest we received over years. And I want to thank you all for the interest in this topic we will discuss here. I am not sure what will come out of this study visit, and often when we organise something we are not quite sure where and how that will end up. I hope that we will get new insights and reflect somehow from a distance. And I also hope that the group of former combatants

Martina Fischer

Let me introduce Daniel Gaede, Director of the Educational Department at the Buchenwald Memorial Foundation, a Concentration Camp near Weimar that is located around 200 km south from Berlin. We know each other from the 1980s, when Daniel studied peace studies at the Free University Berlin and at the University of Hamburg. He started his engagement in the peace movement even earlier, in the 1970s, when he refused the military service and joined a volunteers group "Action Reconciliation Service for Peace" (Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste). He also started to visit former Nazi-concentration camps

no blueprints for dealing with the past. What is helpful in one context may be irrelevant or even harmful in another. However, I am sure, that looking at different regions and experiences can help to systematise and prioritise the complex demands. It may also help to widen the perspective, adapt and develop realistic expectations, with regard to the dynamic of peace work.

I am convinced that it is worthwhile to have a closer look at the processes that have led to the establishment of each and every single memorial, exhibition, or symbol that marks sites related to the past in Berlin, and to ask: Who was involved, who was opposed, and why, and how did the protagonists address or overcome such obstacles and resistance?

The purpose of this workshop is giving space for mutual reflection and mutual learning. We are very curious to know more about your personal engagement in Bosnia, and about your impressions from the sites in Berlin with us and to use this space for discussing your questions.

that is travelling with us will be empowered by this. It is also a kind of reward for them, for some of the efforts they made in the past years. Some of these are quite pioneer acts and they usually did it by such modesty and feeling that they were doing the right thing, that I feel huge respect for this. I am a conscientious objector myself and now working with former combatants and this is very special for me. So, I am very pleased to be here and wish us all a fruitful exchange.

like Auschwitz and later-on worked in Israel for Yad Vashem, the main memorial and research centre on the Holocaust. He also visited the Palestinian territories, occupied by Israel. Over there he came in touch with many people from different sides who had to cope with the legacies of World War II and the Holocaust: As survivors, as those who lost their families, and those who tried to build a new society or even sensitise the next generations for the causes and consequences of racism, militarism and exclusionary politics. Daniel, the floor is yours, and maybe you will get more in detail with regard to your introduction.

2.2. How to cope with all of these memories (?!) Who engaged in remembrance policies in Germany – and why?

Daniel Gaede (Buchenwald Memorial Foundation)

Daniel Gaede

Well, I'm married and have three kids, aged 22, 19 and 17. I found it interesting to see who would mention during the presentation that we are also responsible for members of the next generations personally. I would like to speak about four points.

(1) The first point is: Who am I?

It depends on the group you are actually in how you would define yourself: As a handicapped person for example: I myself became a victim of a bomb attack by a young Palestinian, some would say "a terrorist", because he attacked civilians; others would say: "a freedom fighter". It happened "in Nablus", would the Palestinians say, "it happened in Shrem", would Israelis say. So, already the facts and the places are described with different names and I would not describe myself only as a handicapped person - I am blind in my left eye, but I can see with the right one again. I have experienced, how you can produce effects with violence pretty fast and how difficult it is for doctors to save one single eye at least (...). So, with that background I'm working at the Buchenwald Memorial Foundation. At first I thought, "Dealing all day with the past – how will I live with that, and my wife and the kids? When I was applying for the job I was asked: "How this place should look like, in 50 years?" It means: What for do we need these memories? I'm not a masochist working at a memorial site, but a person who became enriched very much by all the different visitors' groups that I met there. And I will come back to that point later.

(2) My second point refers to your visit to memorial sites in Berlin and to the question how the whole business of remembrance developed in Germany: Who took on a role in that? And how did the people in the two Germanys deal with guilt and the crimes committed?

Much depended on people, who had to leave

Germany and still saw this as their place of origin (Heimat). To give just one example: In Jerusalem I met an old man who grew up in Berlin. He owned an enormous bookshelf, half contained books on Jerusalem, his actual centre of life, and half consisted of books on Berlin. And he wanted to establish new connections with young Germans, in order to bring his positive memories of Germany into line with his life in Israel. To him, "Germany" meant much more than Shoah, the Hebrew term for "Holocaust" catastrophe. He wanted to find something different.

I think that the two "Germanys" were able to face own crimes, because some of the victims were able to re-establish contacts, through church and political connections, very much on the personal level. You mentioned "Aktion Sühnezeichen Friedensdienste". The key point of their work is practical support in reference to the past, i.e. work for handicapped and the elderly, for all those, who would have been discriminated by the Nazis. And that practical part was very important, as it helped to build the bridge and also to involve people who were not personally guilty, but took responsibility and decided to learn more about the past and speak about it. And at the same time it was helpful that all the different generations were involved: People, who were active as resisters during the Nazi era, or within the protestant "confessing church" (Bekennende Kirche), or communists, or survivors of other groups. They all shared their experiences and their hope that others could work and deal with that. So, I think if we speak about the special situation in the two "Germanys", our picture would be incomplete without mentioning all these people in Israel, the United States, the ecumenical network, in the East and West, who were interested in re-establishing connections. And this was not done through state policy, but mainly through NGOs and individuals.

Reports about remembrance policies in Germany fill libraries and I'm not going into the details of all these stories. But I think one of the lessons is that you need persons who are ready to accept young volunteers working in projects in Belgium, France, Israel and other places and don't say: "Germans out! We have enough to do with our memories and we are not ready to be confronted with all that again." These are minorities in the different countries, who are ready to open up, also for their own sake, and this is also quite important. This refers to the aspect of mutual learning which I consider very important.

(3) The third point refers to the framework in which we should think about all these issues:

The time frame: In every conflict, there is a story before the conflict, so the whole timeframe has to be taken into consideration, including the future. (...) The same applies to religion and ethic norms. Human rights norms are not limited to a special time. It is necessary to think in a longer perspective, including the future, which is quite often forgotten.

The space: Our opportunities to act are not limited to a special space. They depend on access to different people and frameworks. So we are speaking here about former Yugoslavia, I do have in mind experiences with people from Chile, and others mentioned Lebanon, Namibia and Peru. So this is referring to the whole planet and not to a special section of it. And I think it is very important not to isolate a conflict, looking just at a special area and leaving out that there are many external influences. You cannot understand the Middle East without the time before in Europe. And you cannot understand it if you just look at Israel without taking the neighbouring countries into consideration.

The roles we play: We can describe ourselves as handicapped, veterans, conscientious objectors, fathers, directors of organisations – it depends on the situation. Our roles - victim, perpetrator or bystander - depend on social situations, and they are constantly changing. (...) To describe a society as a "perpetrators' society" or a "victims' society" means to reduce persons to a single experience. And it's very important to say: "We have more capacities and options." The victim's role is sometimes a privileged one, as people prefer to say: "I was just the victim. I couldn't do anything. I have no responsibility." It is not helpful to stay in this

position, even so sometimes, yes, we were helpless. But things are changing and I would not describe myself as a victim only. I have my experiences and I can work with them. My daughter said once: "In the work you do, it's somehow good that you have that experience." I think she was absolutely right.

Power and norms as described in the Human Rights Declaration: If you speak about societies and exclude the power question, and if you speak about ethics only, it is not enough. We need to think about how to confront those in power with ethic norms. And if you refer to the 1948 Human Rights Declaration, it has a lot to do with the abuse of state power by the Nazis before (...) and it seeks to help the individual defend himself from crimes by the state and its institutions, who are abusing their positions to pursue people and discriminate, isolate and even kill them, instead of taking care of them. Guaranteeing Human Rights in every society (...) is an ongoing task, and to checking, who has been overlooked, who has not been supported. And this relates also to the German society: Not everyone here has the chance to fully enjoy human rights as a basis of his or her own life, and I am not only talking about foreigners, but also about elderly people and many others.

(4) Finally I will come to my fourth point: The future

Now I'm referring to Yugoslavia again. I was in Yugoslavia in 1982. My first experiences with an intensive exchange on the meanings and forms of non-violence were during a 14-day conference in Dubrovnik attended by people from all over the world, from the Philippines, the United States, the Middle East and Europe. And the question was: How can we develop something positive? At the conference a person from the Philippines said: "It is easy for you to talk about non-violence, (...) because the weapons of the Marcos dictatorship are not pointing at you, even supported by the United States. It is easy for you and so difficult for us." His brother fought (...) the Marcos regime. Well, he did not expect the dictatorship to end within years. And we also did not expect the wonderful, peaceful place of Dubrovnik to be a place of war again. (...) One part of our seminar was called "Imagining a World without Weapons within 30 years". This was in 1982, now we are in 2012. I want to mention that in some cases we are living in conditions that people envisioned at that time:

People are travelling a lot, many speak three languages fluently, and they can exchange their experiences. There is no more Cold War confrontation between West and East. That's true and still, there will be conflicts and people [have to] learn more about how to cope with it without violence, at school and in other institutions.

I wanted to mention that because sometimes I feel quite satisfied, as a number of these earlier visions have become reality. But still, we have to continue with our task, because new conflicts are breaking out and we have to cope with them too.



Questions and Discussion

Natascha Zupan (*Director of the Working Group on Peace and Development, FriEnt*): Thank you for the very concise input. You mentioned the role of CSOs that contributed to dealing with the past in Germany. Could you sketch the challenges you faced in your work in earlier years, and how you overcame those challenges?

Daniel Gaede: I can refer to the experience of the Buchenwald memorial, which was established

to memorise the communist resistance against the Nazis in that concentration camp, in a huge national monument established in 1958. It was a cornerstone for the self-definition of East Germany as a socialist and anti-fascistic state, passing on a message for the next generations. After 1989, it became obvious that the Soviets had used the same place to intern Germans under the suspicion of Nazi crimes. None of them were put on trial. More than 7,000 out of 28.000 persons

died of the camp conditions. These facts did not fit German-Soviet friendship. So this was met with silence during the GDR-era. And then many people said: "Look, the communists are even worse than the Nazis." And they suggested that this should be the main focus of the future work of this memorial site. (...) Two things were needed after 1989: (1) Scientific research to find out: what can be proved, what is a legend, what is a myth? (2) Paying respect to the families and the victims, to those who died under these circumstances, without glorifying the Nazis, and not by giving them a monument on the cemetery, but at least by marking the place where they had been buried. It was a very long and difficult debate. But in the end, also the families of those who died in the Soviet camp even accepted the uncomfortable information that many in this camp were members of the Nazi-party and were not innocent, as people would like to think. So, to divide between personal needs in terms of emotion, respect and dignity and places of mourning, on the one hand, and on the other to provide an exhibition and to conduct research is important. I know that it does not happen in many memorial places. But I understood that this is needed. It is unfair to say: "Well, your father or grandfather died in this camp, and somehow it was correct because he was a Nazi", this is painful to hear. If you want a person to be able to live and talk about suffering of others, the person needs first to cope with their own suffering and mourning. If this is not allowed, people cannot open up. I think that this is one of the difficult issues that we are still fighting about: "Who suffered more?" How to weight that? If we speak about victims of bombardments of the cities and about German refugees against the fate of concentration camp victims, we will come to a stalemate. So respect is needed, and science.

Martina Fischer: You talked about timelines and you said that it is necessary to confront those who are in state power with what they have done. Furthermore, you mentioned that it was basically individuals and NGOs who have put the issue on the agenda in Germany. My experience, as a person from the Western part of Germany, is that for a long time, it was very difficult to talk about these issues. In my view, it was the students' movement in the late 1960s that made this an issue. From your point of view, when was it that bottom-up and top-down activities in the field of dealing with

the past linked up with each other and reached a new quality? Can you explain these timelines a bit more?

Daniel Gaede: There were persons as early as April 1945 who were convinced that there is a need for reconciliation and one should not only talk about Germans as a collective of perpetrators. Victor Gollancz, a British journalist, published a text (...) two weeks after the liberation of Buchenwald, and he said one should not just say: "Look what the Germans have done". The first victims of Germans were Germans themselves.

In the former GDR, there was a clear understanding that a new society should fight capitalism, imperialism and fascism and establish a new society, making a clear cut in terms of elites and teachers and so on. In West Germany, [it was considered] far more important to be integrated into the Western societies, into the market, in terms of economy. So, both, the Western allied forces and the old [German] elites did not have a strong interest in figuring out what happened in the Nazi-period. They tried to cover that up in West Germany. (...) During the 1960s, the next generation of students staged provocative attempts to find out what really happened. In the 1970s and 1980s, people wanted to find out what happened to the Jewish community in their neighbourhood. So step-by-step, it was supported (...) and the big memorial sites like Buchenwald received money from the state.

Then, Willy Brandt, a former member of the resistance movement who had escaped to Norway, was about to become the next chancellor of Germany. Some people objected, saying: "He did not fight in the war. He just tried to disappear and save his own life." This argument was also brought against his policy aiming at improving relations between Eastern and Western countries. The question of legal prosecution of people was also a critical issue: There was a law according to which 20 years after the end of the war nobody would go on trial for a murder committed during the war. Then protests arose. People said that after a special date murderers couldn't run free and say: "I killed people but you cannot catch me anymore". And then the question came up: "What happened in institutions and companies?" Research was gradually done by end of the 1980s and in the 1990s.

2.3.

CNA's activities with ex-combatants: Listening to each other's narrative and marking sites of remembrance

Adnan Hasanbegović and Nenad Vukosavljević

Adnan Hasanbegović

Our work with war veterans started 10 years ago. (...) We have a large number of war veterans in our region. We think they have a symbolic importance for constructing peace, as they are witnesses of war. Even though they were combatants, they can become peacekeepers. I would like to see in my society us veterans emerge (...) as peacekeepers in a philanthropic way. This way of constructing peace is a sort of patriotism that I want to be a dominant path in our society. In 2002, we started public debates with veterans from Bosnia, Serbia, and Montenegro. People from different sides had the opportunity to talk about their experiences. In the following years, we had ten trainings with war veterans. We held public debates and seminars with them and we discussed the questions: How can we confront the different narratives and interpretations of the past, which are still predominant in our society? How can we contribute to peace together? How is peace building possible on a personal level and how can we confront the public discourse? My impression is that it is very easy to make peace on an individual level with a person who was your enemy. But the political identities remain in conflict. We, this group of veterans, are trying to initiate a process that contributes to ease relationships. Through these trainings we started thinking about actions we could undertake as peace activists.

From the beginning, we invited people from all sides, from Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia. Even though our work is regional, today most members of the group are from the different sides in Bosnia-Herzegovina and most of our activities focus on this country. Our group now includes veterans and also presidents of war veteran associations. After six years of work, we reached the conclusion that we would be able to organise collective visits to places of suffering in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We visited ten cities where we paid our respects to the

victims. We also made two documentary films about these visits, which were disseminated by media in the region.

It was not easy and took a lot of energy and effort. There was a lot of pressure on us (...). It was not normal that a former enemy comes and pays respects to the victims of the other side. And it was difficult (...) to take war veterans to places of suffering. We spent a lot of energy overcoming our fears. Many people in our societies were against these visits and considered those involved as traitors. But we have managed to do it. We showed empathy to the victims regardless of their nation or religion. This is different from mourning our own victims still viewing the other as the enemy. These visits have allowed us to offer an alternative way of confronting the past in Bosnia-Herzegovina. These visits were a significant step forward. People have seen us and media reported. (...) I think we have given an important message. Afterwards, some politicians visited as well. Croatia's President Ivo Josipović visited the same place we visited the year before, paying respects to the Serb victims, which is a big thing. Serbia's President Boris Tadić also visited places in Bosnia.

What we have gone through was very courageous in my view. (...). It is difficult to go through your own experience of war again. You have your narrative and your convictions. Then you face something, which completely changes your position. I respect those people who are with us here, because we have managed to move in that direction. Through the work of this group, we have created personal contact, friendships, and a level of trust to the point (...) that we go towards each other with open hearts. We see that there is a human need for reconciliation, for finding the truth, and for searching ways of co-existence after so much violence and injustice.

I was a host at our first visit to Sarajevo, together

with Narcis and my colleagues from CNA. I was very scared, because I did not know how my society would react, and what my family would say. We were also reluctant to invite the media because we did not know how they would report. I was also afraid to bring Serb and Croat war veterans to see how Sarajevo suffered in the war. It was very important to me that we managed to do that. (...)

Some visits were easier, some were more difficult. We have tried to visit sites in Croatia, but we have not managed to do it. We face many obstacles and we have to compromise a lot in our work. There were places we could not visit, as politicians opposed the idea. In the beginning, we visited only places of the nation in whose entity we were. And then we managed to visit places in Zavidovići, where our army committed atrocities. In Bosnia and Herzegovina there is one advantage, which may sound strange. Even though the people have experienced the highest level of violence and suffering, they still live with each other. Even though the societies are separated, there is interaction. People meet people from the other side everyday. Even the biggest nationalists have the need for peace. That has opened up a space for us. If you approach the people in the right way, they recognise this need. In Serbia and Croatia, by contrast, the political problem is that there is no interaction with former enemies.

There was also resistance on the personal level due to traumas and experiences of victimisation. Some veterans had been imprisoned themselves. At first they didn't trust the others. Some expected to be accused of being the aggressor. Meanwhile a lot of trust has been built amongst us and this is most important. Therefore I see a huge potential in continuing this work. I think we could maybe even think of visiting Srebrenica in Central Bosnia.

My first feeling in Germany was that we are on the same path, trying to deal with a difficult past full of violence and war. But in Germany, we can deal with it as an element of history. In the "Balkans", that

is my personal impression, it is not history yet, it still radiates into the present. We live in divided societies, ethno-political tensions are ongoing and there is still a lot of pain, fear and hatred. This is due to the relatively short time that has passed by since the wars, but also because we do not deal with these things in the way we should.

Nenad Vukosavljević: I would like to add: In our countries we are confronted with the past every day, reading the papers, watching TV, in our family stories, even at football games. We cannot run away from it (...). Our feelings about the war are very much alive. But there is an official policy of remembrance with different functions. Some functions are constructive which I want to support: For instance, remembering the places of atrocities, paying respect to victims. But other functions I consider destructive, peace-degrading. I think here of ethno-homogenisation and collectivisation of terms victim and aggressor. The question is: How can we face these practices? We have to confront them but not by using a bulldozer. It is not our idea to destroy what we see as a hindrance, but trying to understand and distinct between useful and harmful functions of remembrance policies. (...) In Bosnia we have places of remembrance, which have been constructed by those who are in power as a dominant nation, not paying any attention to the other people who are living there. Maybe there is a specific situation in Brčko, where people share an equal amount of power, but this is a huge problem in other places. And we need to find a way of dealing with this. (...) We think about our work as process of searching together for a just path to deal with the past. During the years, we have sometimes come to dead ends, not knowing how to continue. However, we have also managed to find ways of addressing challenges that we have been stuck with for years, as a beginning of finding solutions.

Discussion of CNA's presentation

Martina Fischer: Thank you Adnan and Nenad. Your remarks have illustrated that dealing with the past demands a lot from both, those who exerted violence and those who were affected as victims. The crucial question is, how to address the past in a way that such a process does not repeat the pain. The floor is open for further questions and comments.

Daniel Gaede: You mentioned borderlines, between nationalities or between veterans and conscientious objectors. I would like to mention that there is another opportunity to think about people: in terms of how they were able to cope with extreme experiences or traumatic situations. Some cannot look at it again, they try to remain silent about it and focus on the future. Others never develop trust again in human beings, including committing suicide after some years because the ground is broken on which people lived before. A further possibility is to put the experience into a framework, which is capable of coping with that, in terms of a political ideology. It was a necessary step for communists to fight fascism, for example. Jehovah's witnesses would say: it was a challenge for my belief and I have to stand these difficulties and continue with my belief. This happens with other religious communities, too. But this is a small group. Then there are also people who try to overcome these borderlines and try to find out why this all happened, by approaches of psychology, history, political research, artistic initiatives or opportunities to talk. And my experience in Buchenwald shows that this is a minority. (...) And there is a last possibility, to feel reinforced, not in a narrow framework of an ideology or religion, but to feel even strengthened to continue what you started. (...) The question of how people cope with extreme experience is a key to find out who is supportive and who has no chance to be supportive, with which we can work. I just want to ask whether this is your experience, too.

Martina Fischer: You mentioned that you would go to Srebrenica. This place is so complicated and has raised so much controversy in Bosnia. If possible, can you tell us a bit more about these plans?

Adnan Hasanbegović: Srebrenica is a symbol of suffering and globally the best known memorial place. We have a problem as we do not have local partners from veterans' organisations there and the political situation in Srebrenica is unfortunately still very unstable. There is a political division and power struggles between different ethnic groups, Bosniaks and Serbs. Therefore, it is likely that we won't be able to make a collective visit. (...) But I think we will manage to go there and leave a trace. We can meet people from the combatants associations and tell them what we do, as a symbolic point. But if we want to meet the people from the society and pay respect of the victims from one and the other side, we need to try to reach some sort of consensus. It seems to me that it is still very difficult in Srebrenica. (...) However, I think it is possible and important for us to show up and visit this place of suffering.

Nenad Vukosavljević: I want to answer Daniels question about the people who will never support us and say: "There are experiences which I cannot get over and I do not want to deal with them." I think that everyone has this experience, but for me it is important to respect this boundary, that nobody feels forced to find peace. I think that it makes no sense to [put pressure on people], it is a personal act. People have the right not to make peace. This is my strong belief. But they have no right to spread hate speech, to promote aggression and violence, and that is what I oppose. It is a big challenge for us that we meet people who have been directly affected as victims or their loved ones have been affected. And there is no picture that could describe all of them. People deal very differently with loss and pain. I accept that we need a different amount of time. Some of those persons who are here with us today have changed a lot, and maybe I have changed as well. But that is a process. Expecting people to join one or two meetings and relieve themselves from all these burdens is not realistic.

Narcis Mišanović (*President of the Organisation of demobilised combatants of the Novi grad - Sarajevo municipality*): Regarding Srebrenica, it is important to

know that the Srebrenica Memorial Centre is separated from both entities, it is a place directly controlled by the government of BiH, and so the local government does not have any influence on it. I would go there, without giving any notice. We can notify the families, and we can organise something there and let the families talk to the delegation. As the Srebrenica Memorial Centre is open to the public, we do not have to notify anyone, we live in a free society. Of course we have to be cautious, next to the centre there is a graveyard where Muslims have rules to obey, and these are the only rules I would respect as a visitor. So I think we can make a visit without any troubles. I think the group is ready for this. And with support of CNA we can do it.

Adnan Hasanbegović: Of course we can visit it but how can we arrange meetings with local government representatives and the war veterans' organisations? We can also go to the memorial centre and pay respect to the victims. But the question is which message we are sending to society. I want to have a deeper message in Srebrenica, with the local population.

Đoko Puščević (*Vicepresident of the War-invalids Association of Republika Srpska in Bosanski Šamac*):

I want to comment on Mr. Daniels presentation, and on the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, compared to Germany. (...) Now that we have visited the memorial sites, the Berlin wall and the Holocaust memorial, I have gained some insights, which have changed my understanding of (...) the division of the German people. It seems that the West German society in 1945 has turned to the economy and it has not prosecuted its war criminals. Our leadership creates memorials, but our economy is failing.

We managed to overcome the crisis after World War II, we were able to develop the economy, and the government created a balance. But now, 20 years after the war [of the 1990s], we still have the status quo. The economic situation influences the peace building process. The economy and the political situation is contributing to tensions between the three ethnicities. The politicians, Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats are trying to keep positions in the government composed of national parties. That's what the local elections have shown recently. The population is still in a fear of war

because people went through a lot of bad experiences during. (...). We have turned to a blame game, and economically we have failed in the past 20 years. People are discontent. If the economic situation were better, people would return to interaction in that field, and personal relationships would be better. But in this situation politicians promote the argument that "they will attack us again" and rely on the bad experiences.

Zoran Panović (*Editor-in -Chief of daily "Danas", Belgrade*):

I am sorry but I do not agree with what my friend said. (...) We have dealt in the media with analysis of the conflict. And I think it is a myth that the bad economic situation is a source of bad peace building. I think this is an illusion. In the former Yugoslavia, the Socialist Confederation, apart from the rural areas, the standard of living was pretty high. And there were conflicts about economic robberies and one local government was accusing the other of stealing their money. We should not fall into that trap and think that if we all have money, we would all get along with each other.

Narcis Mišanović: Regarding Germany, I approve of many things, but of one thing I disapprove. In the "Topography of Terror", I learned that people in the Nazi-regime were released because they had technical expertise. I find this strange. In our society, we are working on war crimes because we are forced by the international community and many war criminals have to be held accountable. We have made some progress on this. As far as Germany is concerned, I think that Germany did not start dealing with its past immediately, but first turned to the economy. I do not know whether this is good or bad. (...) I got the impression that even in Germany not everything functioned the way it should have, and that we also have to learn from your mistakes. We are making good progress, although slow progress.

Martina Fischer: Regarding the role of the economy, we can summarise at least that – compared to the Balkan region today - Germany was in a more favourite situation after World War II, due to the Marshall Plan. Nevertheless, it took a very long time until the broader society was ready to deal with the past.

2.4. War veterans' motivation for peacebuilding and impressions from the study tour

Avdija Banda

President of the United association of ex-comatants, Brčko District, BiH

My personal motivation is to support the integration of war veterans into society. This war left many people in incredibly difficult situations and we saw the need to create veterans' organisations to fix their situation. I was one of the initiators of the veterans' organisation in BiH, which is also a member of the World Veterans Federation. The question of war veterans was linked to status issues in the district of Brčko in 2003 and 2004. When the law on additional rights for disabled people was passed in Brčko, I felt this was beneficial. After that, I worked to support the integration and psychophysical rehabilitation of war veterans through sports. We set up a volleyball club, which plays against teams from Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Hungary. But I missed connections to war veterans in a regional perspective. It was very sporadic through sports. But in this group, I found an organised way of exchanging dialogue and becoming aware of the tragedy of war. I want to raise awareness of this. Much was achieved through this work, but it was not easy for us. We faced various obstacles, obstructions, and even provocations when we started. At the same time, the people who questioned what we do, respected us for trying to build a better future. I think it is my task and duty towards future generations to continue on this path. In BiH, the political climate is unfavourable towards this work. Those in power are trying to keep national tensions alive to be able to manipulate ethnicities easily. But the climate in the society is different. Living in the multi-ethnic society of Brčko, I can say that a high percentage (I guess 80 per cent) of the citizens view our activities positively, and – I believe – also in BiH as a whole.

My impressions gained in Berlin are very difficult and painful. I knew a lot about this history. But it is a

different thing when you actually go there and see photos and documents, originals of what happened in the distant past. It is painful for me, because at the start of the war in 1992, when I was a civilian, I spent time in a camp in Batković. Only after that I joined the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I understood that in Germany, a big timeframe was needed before people started to talk about events of the past. It took from 1945 to 1970 until people decided to enter more vigorously into what happened. This is not long for history, but long for a human life. Maybe some generations will leave the scene without really knowing what happened in BiH during the war and it was a very dirty war. But I think that we made a lot of progress. If we manage to free ourselves from certain political groups and their leaders who are constantly raising tensions, the BiH society will move forward quite fast. I see our work as a progress for humanity. I want to send the message that we need to face the past, and to acknowledge some atrocities that were committed. If this seed is planted and we treat it well, we will move forward faster. One day, when the war veterans get a chance to talk about the past, they will be doing future generations a duty. They should know about all the tragedy of war and prevent a repeat of such events. I do it so that in future a mother does not lose her child in a violent way, a sister does not lose her brother or a child her father. The visit to Berlin has reinforced my decision. We will continue our work on this project that is based on a high level of tolerance and motivation. During this exchange of experience, we heard a lot of stories, which are painful and difficult. But I can say that good friendships have been established. This group has the capacity and the strength to move forward. Thank you.

After Dayton and the war, I was working in management in the Brčko-district, a special district in BiH. In 2000, when the government of Brčko was established, the first mayor was a Serb and member of the RS army, and I had been commander on the other side. This mayor came into my village, he passed the boundary and I said: "Welcome, mayor", and we were happy to see each other and to find a common thread. After that, I was his right-hand man in trying to solve the challenges of property restitution to people who had been expelled. We worked together on this with Avdija, Mirko, and members of the war veterans' group. We established common projects in the Brčko district that deal with all populations. This was also one of the first experiences of co-operation with the government. Later, together with CNA, we visited all the war sites

and paid our respects to all the victims in Brčko. That was successful and very important. Together with the politicians in Brčko, we have found a compromise to create a monument of the Croatian Defence Council and the Army of RS. First we thought that it would be destroyed and vandalised, but it is still there and this is one of the positive examples in BiH. This has motivated me a lot. Our goal is to try to build peace and to remember the recent past, but not forget the time after 1945 either. I think it is time for people to start talking about this and move forward towards reconciliation. I think that those responsible for crimes should be held accountable. The others should live in peace together, with diverse ethnicities. This is my vision, where all my efforts go to, this is my duty towards my children.

I come from Prnjavor in the Republika Srpska. There was no war in Prnjavor, but we participated in the war in other territories, in the defence of our country. We joined battlefields, not only in BiH but also in parts of Croatia. What motivated me to join the organisation for building peace: I met a lot of people there who are good friends now. (...) I do not have a problem with combatants from the other sides and ethnicities. I am an established personality and have a high function in the local self-government of Prnjavor, in the war veterans organisation and in the army as well. A great part of the combatants acknowledge me because they trust me. I often talk to former combatants and try to explain what we do, visiting the war sites and memorials. I plan to visit Srebrenica, together with Muhamed and Đoko. (...) I think we will not have any problems, but you never know. What I do, I do for the young generation. One of my sons was born during the war, now he is a successful student of construction, and my younger son is in primary school. I do not want them to face the same problems. I do not often talk about my experiences, about what has happened to me during the war, maybe because I don't know whether they will understand me. Will they think I am a monster or a murderer, which I am not? Maybe they

would like to hear an explanation of what happened, and why it happened. Not even today do I know why all this happened. For me the state was unquestionable. (...) This war has destroyed many friendships. Part of my youth I spent in Zagreb but I haven't been there after the war. I am afraid that somebody will ask me: "Where have you been? What have you been doing?" I cannot go back to Zagreb. When they look at my face, they know I was a combatant, and I do not know how I would feel then. I worked in a huge company and construction site. I am a construction engineer. I worked on the nuclear power plant in Krško, Slovenia, on the Poljud Stadium in Split, and on the construction of the building of the Croatian TV in Zagreb. We engineers have a special connection with our buildings. I have not seen any of these buildings for more than 20 years. Once I will go and see all of them, regardless what happens. (...) I am the first to organise that meeting in Prnjavor. This will be a pilot project. If it is successful it will be easier for me to go to Zagreb. And I want to organise a visit to Croatia, Zagreb, sooner or later. I would really like to see what it would be like. CNA and what we are doing with them is an opportunity for people to see what other people think.

I was an under-aged combatant in the war. My first motivation after the war was to start a process of reconciliation as I was unable to hate and I am an optimist. And I think with the right motivation and approach we can avoid any conflict not only in our territories, but also all over the world. I do not want to talk about the causes of the war because I was too young. I wanted to study law in Zagreb but then the war broke out and I stayed in BiH. And after a year, the war started there as well. Daniel mentioned in his presentation that there are people who are unconscious peace builders. Maybe I am one of them. I was 21 when the Dayton Agreement was signed and had experienced three years of war. I lost my right leg and I went through a period of rehabilitation. I went to Brčko and I tried to establish contact with the people over there, without being aware that I was probably taking the first steps towards peace.

I realised that some people are unconscious peace builders. In my village for example when people want to buy a product cheaper, they go to the Serbian villagers, talk to them and buy it there. But before that they

insisted that there should be no contact nor peace. But what they are doing is exactly that, building peace without noticing. Another example of co-existence is when people meet former enemies at work. When people talk about normal life, families and so on (...) they realise that they were enemies, and maybe they will also find a way to make peace with each other. Perhaps there are people who do not want that. But I don't want them to obstruct me on my own path. In my association, some people asked me: "How should I explain to my child that I am going to Serbia?" That same person has ten Serb friends he works with.

When I became president of the association of disabled war veterans in 2003, we met veterans' representatives of all three sides and talked about what we could do. In 2007, we met CNA. We are doing these activities for five years. Maybe we were pioneers. I want to pay respect to all of them. And I want this group to grow to more than 1,000 members, and to spread to two or three or even five countries, so that people can live a normal life and not think about who is a Serb, Croat or Bosniak.

I want to thank all the people from CNA and the hosts from Germany who are supporting this work. Yesterday, in the subway I said, if I had to choose that again, I would have a hard time putting together such a team. We all endured war and tragedies and we understand each other. We all wore uniforms. Maybe those who did not experience this, do not understand. We have the strength to construct something better for future generations. Mr. Daniel mentioned the need to prevent this from happening ever again to us, our children and anywhere. We can influence our society. I hope we will

grow in popularity so that more of the population will include themselves into our work. We always try to establish realistic goals. We have started an initiative to mark the yet unmarked places of sufferings, for a plaque of remembrance to be set, where minorities were victims. We became friends during these event. One of our goals is to organise a visit to Srebrenica. I am happy to put my efforts into the work that CNA has started, and I hope that as many people as possible will follow.

Novica Kostić

President of the association "Veterans for Peace" - Vlasotince, Serbia

I come from Serbia, which was involved in some wars and does not acknowledge, a country that officially puts the number of war veterans at 400,000, but statistics put the number of people with war experience closer to 700,000. I took part in the war in Croatia when it first broke out in 1991. Fortunately, I was wounded and I do not have a long war record. But I spent a long period in rehabilitation and I saw many youngsters, who were in the war and left badly wounded, without parts of their bodies. This made me wonder about the sense of all this. I want to find out why people, who speak the same language, caused each other so much violence. I cannot understand that someone would torture and inflict pain to someone else, that there is so much hate speech and hatred among nations. I want war veterans in Serbia to accept their personal responsibility and confront the past and question the rhetoric that we were victims and

we were forced to participate in the war. We all had the opportunity to reject the war and the call for mobilisation in Serbia. I wanted to start some activity and I was lucky to meet CNA. In 2002, I slowly started participating and following the work of this group and now I am a constant guest in Bosnia and Serbia.

Recently, we had a good result, because the Serbian TV broadcast a programme, in which I participated as well as a person from Sarajevo and another one from Zagreb. The reactions to the programme were huge, something started moving. There were also a lot of negative reactions in the public and the media, but at least there were reactions. (...) I think the media also have to face their responsibility for what they did before and during the war. My motivation is the same as the others: to make sure that such a war will not happen again and to prevent the next generation from such suffering.

Ibrahim Topčić

President of the associations of ex-combatants "Goranovi", Gornji Vakuf / Uskoplje

We all had our experiences in the war and we were all relieved when the Dayton Agreement was signed. Nobody wanted this war to go on. This is the reason why we are here in this initiative for peace and trust building. As a mature person, you accept that you have to guarantee that your children will not experience someone pushing them into a war and a responsibility to build a better world. My city, Gornji-Vakuf/Uskoplje, is similar to Berlin. It doesn't have a wall, but it is divided among Croats and Bosniaks, and we citizens live next to each other, but do not have any contact. Our kids go to the same school, but not to the

same classes. There is one classroom for Croat and one for Bosniak children. They do not even use the same entrance. This motivates me to engage in trust building.

I want to add that the war veterans club, which plays volleyball, organised a game with members of the Croat war veterans in Split for the first time. There were six Croat and Bosniak clubs. I also helped to finance this. And I hope to organise it again next year and to make the event even bigger, because our happy atmosphere surprised the spectators. And this can be a step towards knocking down this invisible wall.

Narcis Mišanović

President of the Organisation of demobilised combatants of the Novi grad - Sarajevo municipality

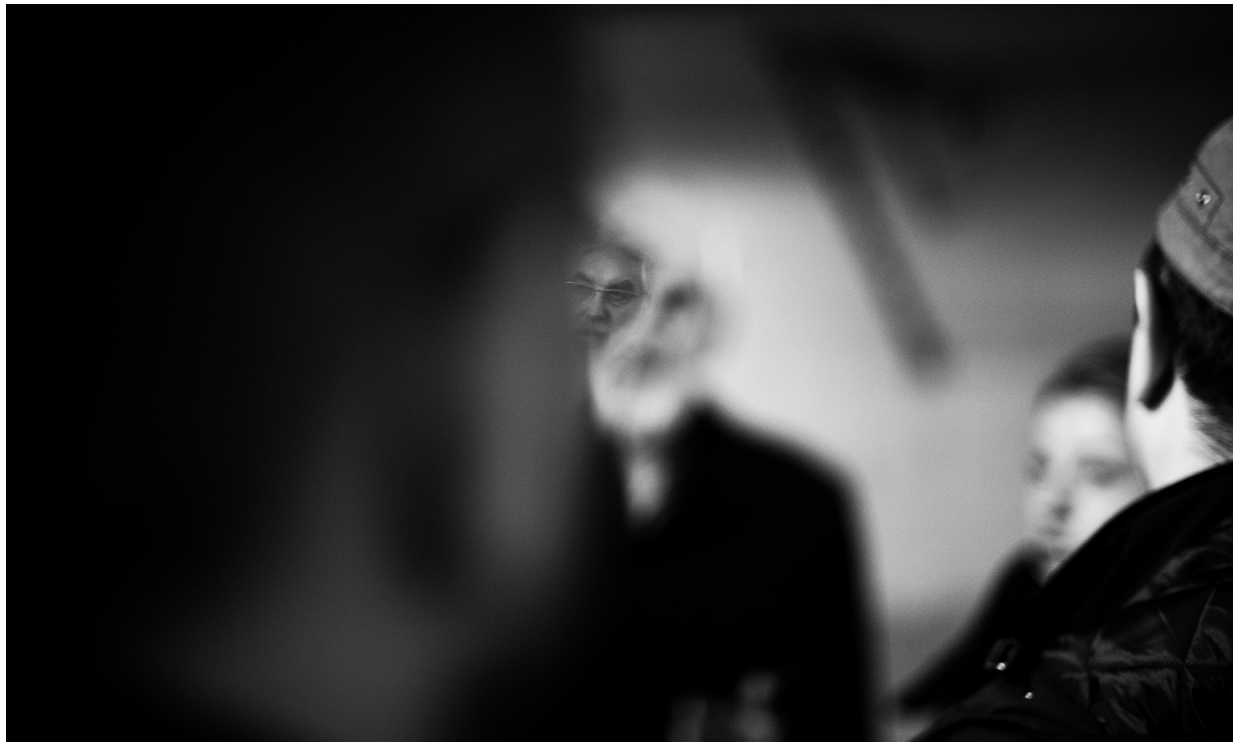
Adnan contacted me through my local association. Someone called me and said: "We have a job for you, someone will call you. They bring together Serbian and Croatian war veterans for dialogue." I packed my things, and my colleagues gave me a hug as if I was going off into a war. I travelled to Jahorina where I met some of the people now here with me. They told me their stories and when I heard them, I understood that we have similar perspectives,

that we were not dogs of war but that the war came to our houses and through our door steps in Prnjavor, in Sarajevo, and elsewhere. Each of us had to defend their homes, and that is honourable. It is my duty as a man to defend my house. Some special units from Niš came and they took my home away and expelled us from the place where I was born and where my family is from. They said they were "liberating" these territories. It is a difficult moment when you are chased

out of your home. You will be either killed or you defend yourself, and it is a normal human reaction to defend yourself. (...) I told this story to the group and they listened to me. And then I realised that they are similar people with similar experiences, and that they respect what I said. The worst thing that can happen is when people say: "No, this is not true, you are lying". The concept that CNA prepared for us was of a high quality. I returned from that trip as a peace builder. And I told other people about this (...). From that moment on, I changed as a person. I never hated people. I look at them as individuals, whether they are good and bad.

Patriotism is a topic that war profiteers and the ones, who paved the way towards this, talk about. They insist the state is most important and sow more hatred. This team is good, together we can fight against these perspectives, and we can do it on our own. Sometimes, I blame Europe. We are in the neighbourhood of Europe. I think their responsibility is to help people understand that it would be fatal to think of new wars. Nobody should ever again lose a family, as I have, and nobody should

be forced to be a refugee, to be hungry and thirsty, and to miss one's own childhood. This is the reason why I joined this group. This is a resistance group because the politics in place are very dangerous. When you listen to politicians, you have the feeling that people want to kill each other every day. There were some problems in Republika Srpska. An international journalist asked me whether I would be ready to take a gun and go to war again and I asked: "What are you talking about? Let politicians talk among themselves and that's it. When I look out of the window I see only normal people who just want to live their lives." Unfortunately, we do not have much space in the media. I participated in two films, which had a lot of problems going on air. The state and the media do not want to lose their leading positions and state owned media are under control of the politicians. They created the state and want to keep it like that. It is easy for them to always drop back to war and patriotism. And I hope we will be able to fight this together with our organisation.



Comments and discussion

Martina Fischer: Many of you said that you do this work for your children and the generations to come. Ibrahim mentioned the segregated education system in Bosnia and the disastrous example of the “two schools-under-one-roof” system where children enter from different sides and have no contact with each other. This was established after the war and supported by international organisations. It was meant as an interim system of transition in Bosnia. But finally, it seems to have contributed to the divide. Everything is divided along ethnopolitical lines and the education system supports that. Ibrahim also mentioned the importance of education and sensitising new generations for an alternative. Do you see any possibility to connect with teachers? Could you possibly tell to school children what you told us here or is this absolutely impossible?

And let me ask a second question: What the group has presented sounds very convincing, but a question that comes to my mind is: Is your co-operation full of harmony? If you plan to visit a war crimes site, are there also different opinions or issues you are struggling about? How do you come to a decision?

Eckhard Volkmann (BMZ): I want to extend the question on co-operation with teachers to civil society in general. Can you incorporate women? Can you incorporate people who have not been fighting, how do you reach them, is that possible or not?

Ibrahim Topčić: In my city, Professor Jasminka Drino-Kirlić leads the youth centre and is a hero who fights against discrimination in schools. My former geography teacher [is an opposite example]. He defends the right to segregation in school, which is difficult for me to accept. In former times, when I went to school, I did not feel that he had this sort of perspective. I did not hate him nor did he hate us. The fact that half of us were Croatian and the other Bosniak was no problem. The situation in Mostar is similar. There is a commission that strives for a regulation to ban these types of schools. It is slow, but I think that progress is happening and we will soon get rid of this sort of apartheid schools.

Nenad Vukosavljević: I think the segregation in BiH is a result of mistrust and fear that is institutionalised. One cannot bridge the gap just by developing alternative programmes for dialogue. You can do it with individuals but institutionally it will remain in place. It is a very slow process. What keeps it alive is mistrust and fear. It is in a way a closed circle and to break this, demands various actions in various fields.

Narcis Mišanović: These problems exist because of the Dayton Agreement, which has put us into a strait jacket. We have to change the law and the constitution. Nothing has been solved with this constitution. We start to talk, but we do not find a conclusion. The problem in our country is that responsibility is divided [between too many political and administrative bodies] and you don't know who is responsible for what. That is one of the problems, which we should solve.

Nedžad Horozović: I would like to answer Martina's question. In this group, we often have different interpretations of the past. We can talk about some points, and we still can't about others. There are other connections between us, through personal stories, sharing experiences, acceptance of other perspectives of suffering. We have created a base of trust. (...) It enables us to reach difficult decisions. So even when we compromise, we are aware that there are things which we can still work on. About some things we agree, about others we don't. But the process, the goal is what enables us to go through this.

Đoko Pupčević (Bosanski Šamac, BiH): We, people from these regions want to bring life back to normal. We need to follow Jesus Christ who said on the cross, it is human to forgive. If he forgave the thief next to him and took him to heaven, we have to go on this path not to hate anyone, because we are all people. We all have the same habits, same needs, same feelings, we all have families, and we are doing this for them. (...) We are doing this for a better tomorrow, in our society, in our state and our regions.

Amer Delić (CNA, Sarajevo): I would like to reflect on the first question. (...) The way in which this group functions is based on a new state of trust which we created among each other. In Bosnia, courts of international institutions deal with crimes that people have committed towards the other side. (...). However, in our region, the suffering on the other side is taboo. The suffering of a soldier is taboo. Nobody cares about the soldier, and many people think that he deserves what happened to him. But we have developed another approach by acknowledging and paying respect to the victims of the other side as well, putting ourselves into someone else's perspective. In this way, we created trust, we opened up towards each other, and we established friendships. (...) Sometimes you have to swallow your fear and see how things will be accepted in your society.

Sonja Nakad (Fellow at Berghof Foundation; Peace Education): When I listen to your stories, I see how similar wars are everywhere, in your country and in mine, Lebanon. There are always a lot of victims. Sometimes, people who are seen as aggressors are actually also victims themselves. To answer the question about involving other people in addition to the ex-fighters: In Lebanon, after the war ended in 1990, we had the problem that we didn't have a common history. We don't have a book that tells what happened during the war, because the politicians don't agree on this history. This is a big problem for the next generation, because people don't know what happened. We noticed that due to the tension in our country, unfortunately the young generations are more and more ready to go to war again (...). So we had the idea to bring ex-fighters to talk to them. It was very difficult to find someone who had the courage that you have, saying: "Yes, I was a fighter, I participated in the war and I don't want to do this again." We found a group of people who were ready to talk. Some of them did not want to show their faces nor give their names. We brought high school students who (...) interviewed them. We took videos of the interviews. Most of the ex-fighters started very enthusiastically, they recounted what they did in the war and by the end of the video, they were crying. One of them said: "You know, I have children of your age and I never told them these things, because I regret them. I cannot tell my child that I killed people. And now if

you ask me, why I killed these people, I don't know. I was 16 years old and like you - I was enthusiastic. But I never tell these things to my family, because I am very ashamed of what I did." (...) By the end of the documentation, the students said, now we know that the story by the media, that war is nice and we should be enthusiastic for it, is not true. (...) I just wanted to share this experience with you.

Anja Petz (Bildungs- und Begegnungsstätte für gewaltfreie Aktion - Kurve Wustrow): It is very moving to me to listen to your experiences. Looking at the war in Germany, I am third generation, my parents were small children, and they were born in the last years of World War II. I am wondering what difference it would have made to them, and to me, if my grandfathers had the courage you have. (...) As far as I know, in the years after the war, and still today, there is often the feeling of taboo. So I really admire and honour your courage that you speak out with each other and go to places together. Speaking as a project partner of CNA, I remember that when the idea came up, that approaching war veterans is very important, it was not clear to me where it was going. That we are now sitting here together in a circle like this, somehow comes close to our very brave dreams (...) What we have always valued is that CNA is not avoiding taboos and touchy issues. (...) The important thing is to open up and to talk about it. This impresses me very much.

Natascha Zupan: I think Germany is a perfect example of the fact that there is no perfect way of dealing with the past. There are many different ways. In Germany, we are still struggling with many issues. They are popping up in the public sphere and you are confronted with them in the private space. (...) Probably having more exchanges of this kind between people from different generations would open peoples' eyes for the different dynamics. (...) Thanks a lot for sharing your experiences. I participated in one of the first public hearings by CNA and war veterans in Vlasotince. It was one of the most impressive experiences I have ever had. Listening to you today after ten years (...) is great. I wish you all the best for any step you are taking on an imperfect road of dealing with the past in Bosnia.

Adnan Hasanbegović: I want to add to the topic

Ibrahim was talking about: segregated schools and the political climate in Bosnia and why I think that what we do is actually very important (...). It is extremely difficult to overcome these political divisions, because they have been drawn in blood. A lot of people have died on the ground of political ideas and goals. We try to find a peaceful position that would calm things down, which doesn't choke (...) the identities, but enables a peaceful coexistence. We take steps based on personal experience, empathy, and facing individual responsibility. We, veterans who participated in this war take on responsibility for the actions that happened. This encourages a solution to the problems of segregation. It is normal that there is segregation after hundreds of people were killed. (...) We are talking about things, which are not simple. I think there is hope as we are opening a path to acknowledgement of the atrocities (...). We have to deal with the different narratives and bring them to peace. The question is: will we have just one history? I have a big dilemma with that. I think that we are [rather] working towards a coexistence of these stories. I hope this will (...) support a collective search for a just society, in Bosnia and on a regional level.

Nenad Vukosavljević: I would like to add that I find it very important to share experiences with people also beyond the region. I think it is a global responsibility. This meeting today has been inspiring to me, hearing your reactions, how you see things, what you notice, and how it refers to your background. We have received

so much support and gained so much knowledge particularly from Germany and from people who somehow feel obliged to pass on the experience that has been gathered here. This has been a wonderful opportunity and I hope that we can continue to contribute to it. I am very grateful to the Federal Ministry of Development who made this possible and had understanding for this action.

Eckhard Volkmann: I came here with a lot of questions, due to my own past. It is very far from what you know about Germany and from your own stories. But I have a conflict history as well. (...) And my society deals with it in just a few ways. And it is very important that we have opportunities, like Natascha said, to see people having the courage dealing with much more difficult problems. It is very important to develop perspectives how to deal with this global responsibility. And I think this is a very strong argument for us to continue supporting this. I want to address this also to Kurve Wustrow as we also intend to continue the co-operation with you.

Daniel Gaede: I think this day was a wonderful example of listening and taking care of each other. I also think, and this was not mentioned so far, that there is a special type of humour in this group, too. This helps also too keep a little bit of distance sometimes, and prevents from taking everything dead seriously. Thanks a lot.



2.5. Summary and further perspectives for ex-combatants' work for peace

Martina Fischer:

From my own experience and looking back at the process of dealing with the past in the Western part of Germany I can say that this process was marked by a very slow dynamic. Various leaders of the Nazi-Regime were tried by a Special Tribunal in Nuremberg in 1946. There were initiatives for lustration in public institutions. But all of this did not have an immediate impact and did not enhance a process of dealing with the past in broader society. A culture of denial has lasted in relevant parts of politics and society until the 1970s. A shift in the discourse was influenced by the Eichmann-Trial in Israel that aimed at prosecution of those who designed the Holocaust, and then the Auschwitz Trials were important, that were accompanied by objective and informative media reporting. These events, together with official apologies contributed to societal dialogue on the past and reconciliation between Germany and Israel, and Poland. Furthermore the students' movement of 1968/69 challenged the culture of silence and denial. And finally the dissemination of the Holocaust TV Series 1979 - illustrating the Shoah by presenting the fate of families – presented a breakthrough. For the first time the Holocaust-issue was spread into the living rooms. This period was also marked by a generational shift. Only in the 1980s did the Second World War, the Holocaust and the NS period become a regular element of school curricula. At this time critical historians challenged the society and gave the victims a voice by encouraging them to tell their stories and to rewrite history from their perspectives.

So, which lessons and experiences from the German context might inform peace work in Bosnia? I wish to highlight three aspects:

1. Readiness to deal with the past takes time and is faced by many obstacles, even under very favourable framework conditions such as military defeat, and – after some time - more or less a mainstream consensus on the question of exactly who was victim and perpetrator. Even in the German context it took around 40 years for such an open debate to come, and there were so many

obstacles and opposing forces, both in politics and societies. Overcoming cultures of denial and changing patterns of selective remembrance takes decades, in settings where gross human rights violations and crimes against humanity are at stake.

2. The development over here is also accompanied by serious setbacks: Although WWII, Nazism and the Holocaust have been so broadly and critically discussed by the parliaments, media, schools etc., racist attitudes are still persisting and can be found across social levels, as an expert report commissioned by the German government recently evidenced. Furthermore neonazi-activities are still ongoing and we look back to a series of hate crimes that were committed against immigrants.¹ I am very sorry to say that in today's Germany people are still at risk of being killed just because of their non-German origin or colour of their skin. It comes to mind that the sociologist and philosopher Theodor W. Adorno said that those who argue that Auschwitz "was" a phenomenon of the past are mistaken: He was concerned that Auschwitz "is" [at present] and always remains. Therefore he insisted that dealing with the Holocaust should be a constant and central element of education, and that each and every new generation should learn about the conditions under which a human being transforms into an inhumane person.

3. Bearing in mind what Adnan said about the veterans' group being afraid of how the society would react and that many people were against these activities, I would like to add that in Germany we had a

¹ The extremist, but legally operating, "National Democratic Party" (NPD) holds seats in a number of communal parliaments as well as in two Länder-parliaments with 5.6 and 6 % of the votes. Newly emerging right wing populist groups such as "Pro Deutschland" have been formed with a strong anti-Islamic gesture. Informal groups in support of the NPD, so-called „Kameradschaften“, are able to mobilise youngsters for demonstrations or concerts of indicated right wing bands. In some rural as well as urban areas, people who are considered immigrants are threatened by local neo-Nazi groups. In November 2011, the clandestine right-wing extremist group "National Socialist Underground" (NSU) was detected. Its members had murdered 9 citizens with migrant background and a police woman. Deficits of the work of the Intelligence Services were discovered and the role of the state institutions remains to be investigated by a Commission of the Bundestag (M. Schroer-Hippel).

very similar experience. Those who engage in this field some decades ago had to face many negative reactions. Enhancing societal dialogue and debate on the past and changing policies of remembrance needs courage and commitment by individuals and personalities who take risks to confront mainstream society, who remind us of the victims, who ask institutions and individuals to take political and personal responsibility for crimes and human rights violations committed in the past. In this context I want to quote some words from a speech by the Peter Steinbach, Director of the Documentation Centre for Resistance, a few days ago. Honouring the 80th birthday of the writer and historian Saul Friedländer (who lost many members of his family in the Holocaust and is one of the main initiators of societal debates on this dark side of history in Germany), Steinbach said [this is my own translation]:

“Well, I think it is a particular way of dealing with the past that is reflected by German History. This way is widely appreciated and accepted in South Africa, in Argentina, in Latin-America. But this should by no means lead the Germans to feel self-righteous, as it is not a collective achievement that has contributed to this specific form of dealing with the past. It is the achievement of individuals, of persons who took the courage and committed themselves to challenge the

mainstream and the whole society, and who pushed and proclaimed that this society should face and confront itself with the past.”²

Building on this quote, I want to emphasise that – although immediate success cannot be expected – you can be sure that your personal engagement in Bosnia and Serbia definitely makes a difference on the long run, that it impacts on the dynamic of the societies and that it is important for future generations - no matter how many obstacles and difficulties you may face at present.

Finally I want to wish you an inspiring final phase of your tour. I very much hope to see you again in Berlin, Bosnia or Serbia. Thank you all for participating, good luck and farewell from my side.

Nenad Vukosavljević:

Thank you all for coming. I hope you found it inspiring and useful. I’m looking forward to the next occasion to continue on these topics.

² „Er hat die Ritualisierung der Erinnerung durchbrochen“ [„He has broken through the ritualisation of remembrance“]. Peter Steinbach online at <http://www.dradio.de/dkultur/sendungen/thema/1889935/> (accessed 16 October 2012).



2.6. List of Participants

1) Participants from the region of Former Yugoslavia

Group of ex-combatants:

Ivo **Anđelović** (Brčko, BiH)
Muhamed **Azabagić** (Tuzla, BiH)
Avdija **Banda** (Brčko, BiH)
Zerin **Džambić** (Tuzla, BiH)
Novica **Kostić** (Vlasotince, Serbia)
Narcis **Mišanović** (Sarajevo, BiH)
Asim **Parlić** (Zavidovići, BiH)
Đoko **Pupčević** (Bosanski Šamac, BiH)
Ibrahim **Topčić** (Gornji Vakuf/Uskoplje, BiH)
Ljuban **Volaš** (Prnjavor, BiH)
Mirko **Zečević Tadić** (Brčko, BiH)

Center for Nonviolent Action (CNA):

Amer **Delić** (CNA, Sarajevo)
Adnan **Hasanbegović** (CNA, Sarajevo)
Nedžad **Horozović** (CNA, Sarajevo)
Nenad **Vukosavljević** (CNA, Belgrade)

Supporters & friends of CNA:

Maria **Glišić** (Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Belgrade, Serbia)
Zoran **Panović** (Editor-in-chief of “Danas”; Belgrade, Serbia)
Faruk **Šehić** (Journalist, Bihać/Sarajevo, BiH)

2) Participants from Germany

Martina **Fischer** (Berghof Foundation; Deputy Director of Conflict Research)
Daniel **Gaede** (Buchenwald Memorial Foundation; Director of the Educational Department)
Nastassja **Gotzler** (Berghof Foundation, Student Assistant)
Daina **Hues** (Robert Bosch Stiftung, Project Director)
Uli **Jäger** (Berghof Foundation; Director of Peace Education)
Izvor **Moralić** (Interpreter; Borovac-Knabe & Partner Consult)
Sonja **Nakad** (Berghof Foundation; Peace Education)
Anja **Petz** (Bildungs- und Begegnungsstätte Kurve Wustrow)
Sandra **Pfahler** (Berghof Foundation, CEO)

Miriam **Schroer-Hippel** (Peace Researcher; Co-organiser of Study Trip)
Elvira **Veselinović** (Interpreter; Borovac-Knabe & Partner Consult)
Eckhard **Volkmann** (Desk officer - Peace and Security / Civil Peace Service, BMZ)
Hildegard **Weigert** (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen-Zivik)
Markus **Weissert** (Berghof Foundation, PhD student)
Oliver **Wils** (Berghof Foundation; Director of Peace Support)
Tilman **Wörtz** (Journalist; Zeiteinspiegel - Peace Counts)
Natascha **Zupan** (Director of the Working Group on Peace and Development, FriEnt)



3.Studying Memorials to the Holocaust and Totalitarian Regimes: Discussions and impressions

3.1.Visiting memorial sites and cultural forms of remembrance

The study group from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia visited the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, the Topography of Terror as well as the memorial “Hohenschönhausen”, a former state security prison of the German Democratic Republic. The itinerary of the seven-day trip also included talks with civil society initiatives for documenting local and oral history as well as artistic forms of remembering the persecution of Berlin’s Jewish inhabitants in former Jewish quarters. Many of the memorials were initiated as a consequence of citizens’ commitment. Throughout the visit, members of the group raised multiple issues for discussion. The following section gives a brief overview of the topics.¹

¹ For more extended information on the sites see the documentation “The heritage of National Socialism. The Culture of Remembrance in Berlin”, compiled by Ivana Franović, Nenad Vukosavljević and Nedžad Horozović, at www.nenasilje.org/publikacije/pdf/articles/The_Culture_of_Remembrance_in_Berlin.pdf.

The “Topography of Terror”: The Centre of the Secret State Police (Gestapo) and planning hub of the Nazi regime

The “Topography of Terror”¹ is a documentation and exhibition centre located on the grounds of what used to be the headquarters of the Secret State Police (Gestapo), the SS, and the Criminal Police under the roof of the Reich Security Main Office led by SS head Heinrich Himmler until 1945. Civil society activists had pushed for establishing a memorial and documentation site here in the 1980s when the place was used as a junkyard. Historian Jens Neumann guided the group around the exhibition. He explained that the above mentioned institutions were responsible for planning the Nazi-terror in Germany and all over Europe. He also stressed continuity after the war in West Germany: The successor institution of the Reich Security Main Office, the Federal Criminal Investigation Department, was one of the bodies responsible for the detention and prosecution of Nazi criminals. At the same time, many middle and higher ranking officers from the former regime remained in influential positions, because their professional and technical expertise was seen as needed.

¹ Topography of Terror: www.topographie.de/en/.



One participant wondered whether it was helpful to show how those “experts” could continue to operate in leading positions after the war and how the prosecution of war criminals failed. He pointed out that young visitors might conclude that criminal acts paid off. Another participant added later he was shocked by the fact that the former Nazi-“experts” were allowed to hold positions where they were responsible for prosecuting war criminals. He expressed hope that this does not happen in Bosnia.

Reflecting on the time span until initiatives began pushing for a documentation centre, a group member said that a period of just 30 years might be rather short for people to start dealing with Nazi crimes, but was long compared to a human life. He expressed hope that this happens faster in the successor countries of former Yugoslavia.

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe

The Holocaust Memorial was constructed to commemorate the murdered Jews of Europe¹. The first initiative for a central memorial came from a small group of citizens shortly before the fall of the Berlin wall. After long and controversial discussions, the memorial was constructed following a decision by the German Parliament, the Bundestag. It can be seen as a renewed acknowledgement of the past by the newly reunified Germany. The memorial consists of more than 2,700 concrete blocks placed on uneven ground which can be approached from all sides. The architect Peter Eisenman was convinced that a crime of this dimension could not be represented by traditional means. The Bundestag insisted on the construction of an additional information centre. The exhibition addresses the dimensions of the Holocaust, its scenes all over Europe, as well as names and stories of victims and victim families. Additionally, several online archives can be accessed. The war veterans were interested in how victims' groups had reacted to the memorial. Jens Neumann explained the many controversial positions: some consider it a positive sign of acknowledgement, while others remain sceptical. He pointed out that the huge monument has prompted questions of whether Germans want to close the folder of dealing with the past. Others prefer smaller, more decentralised and modest forms of remembrance, which illustrate for example how the persecution of Jews began in everyday life.

1 Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe: www.stiftung-denkmal.de/publikationen/kurzinformationen/informationen-in-20-sprachen.html.





The Hohenschönhausen Memorial - Secret Remand Prison in the former GDR

The Hohenschönhausen Memorial is located on the premises of the main former remand prison of the GDR's Ministry of State Security (MfS)¹. Mr. Fuhrmann, a historian and former detainee, explained that initially Soviet occupying forces installed their main secret police prison here in 1945/46. At that time, inmates were held in windowless basement cells and did not have access to legal assistance. Later, the MfS had a modern prison built in which members of the political opposition or people who had tried to flee the country were interrogated. Sophisticated techniques were used to isolate prisoners.

In the discussion, participants asked about activities of former state security officers. Mr. Fuhrmann mentioned several associations, whose members claim they did not commit any injustices². According to the Unification Treaty that regulated the merger of former East with West Germany, state officers were not prosecuted as long as they did not break any laws in the former GDR, he explained. However, these laws had been formulated to protect the activities of the secret service.

One participant had the impression that the communist regime in Germany was more repressive towards citizens than the regime in the former Republic of Yugoslavia. Another group member, who had been in detention in Bosnia as a civilian, felt reminded of his own experiences.

¹ Memorial Hohenschönhausen (Former main remand prison of the East German Ministry of State Security): www.stiftung-hsh.de/.
² Association of former officers of GDR state institutions i.e.: www.mfs-insider.de/ or www.isor-sozialverein.de.

The Sachsenhausen Memorial and the Brandenburg Police School

The Sachsenhausen Memorial is situated on the grounds of the former concentration camp outside of Oranienburg, a city near Berlin¹. In the aftermath of World War II, the Soviet Armed Forces used this area as a camp where many war prisoners died. The visitors from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia felt deeply touched by the large area commemorating the incredible suffering of people imprisoned and murdered here. Especially the “Station Z”, the scene of organised mass killings and the crematorium, where Nazi-perpetrators forced inmates to search for gold in the dead bodies, left an intense impression. One participant said he could almost hear the screams of the victims. Actually visiting these places rather than just reading about them was very valuable, he said. One person concluded that processes of reconciliation need both, the readiness to acknowledge that atrocities have been committed and to forgive.

The Brandenburg Police School (Fachhochschule der Polizei des Landes Brandenburg) is adjacent to the memorial. During the NS-period, the SS owned the buildings that formed an entity with the concentration camp. The president of the police school, Rainer Grieger, explained the different development paths of law enforcement institutions in Germany after World War II: West Germany took a decentralised approach with the ideal to be open to the citizens, the East German forces were centralised and aimed to protect the state from its citizens. There was a need to integrate these different traditions. As a result of this experience, German delegations have been sent to Bosnia-Herzegovina to support the reforms and co-operation of the police forces. The police school has been searching for an appropriate way to address the past and the Nazi-background of these premises within their police training today, he explained. To this end, an exhibition highlighting the role of the German police in the NS state, for example, is now shown in all German police schools. The vice president of the police school, Jochen Christe-Zeyse, added that ordinary policemen committed mass shootings of civilians in Poland and the Ukraine. Young trainee police officers should understand that ordinary men could become murderers under certain conditions. It is up to all of us to ensure that such conditions do not emerge, he pointed out.

The president of the police school was asked to assess the chances that police institutions in Bosnia would eventually feel obliged to protect not only “their people” but all citizens. Mr. Grieger replied that external assistance can only achieve results when those involved want this to happen. One participant mentioned that international police forces sent to Bosnia-Herzegovina during the war had unfortunately been of little help in preventing further atrocities. Later, one member of the group said he was very impressed by the visit and expressed hope that good police officers are trained here. Another participant was sceptical, and said the police school’s location beside a memorial to a concentration camp was inappropriate. He suggested the space should be kept free.

1 Memorial Sachsenhausen: www.stiftung-bg.de/gums/en/index.htm.

Artistic forms of remembering exclusion and persecution of Jewish citizens

Places of Remembrance in the Bavarian Quarter – Orte des Erinnerns im Bayrischen Viertel

“Places of Remembrance” is an artistic form of commemoration in the district Berlin-Schöneberg initiated in 1993. The artists Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock designed 80 plates to mark the streets¹. One side of the plate shows an anti-Jewish law or regulation passed between 1933 and 1945; a picture on the other side illustrates the topic. The collection shows how the exclusion and persecution started and developed over years. Until 1941, 16,000 Jewish citizens inhabited the quarter, many of them doctors, lawyers and well-placed middle-class professionals. In 1943, none of them were left. “Places of Remembrance” was once initiated as a temporary art campaign and sparked plenty of controversy among the local neighbourhood. Meanwhile, the plates have become a permanent art installation and are regularly maintained by the Department of Culture’s public administration in the district.

1

Places of Remembrance in the Bavarian quarter: www.stih-schnock.de/remembrance.html.





The “Missing House” and “Stumbling Stones”

The former Jewish quarter “Scheunenviertel” in the heart of the city (Spandauer Vorstadt), was an important centre of Jewish life in Berlin. During the Nazi dictatorship, the Gestapo used Jewish institutions in this quarter, such as schools or homes for the elderly, as detention camps to prepare the deportations. The Nazis attempted to erase traces of Jewish life, such as the old Jewish Cemetery from 1672. Today, some signs of Jewish life mark the quarter again, for example the recently restored Synagogue Oranienburger Street¹. Several artistic forms of remembrance across the quarter address the persecution. The “Missing House” is an initiative by the artist Christian Boltanski. It is located in a gap in terraced houses that were hit by air strikes in World War II. The wall bears the names and professions of the (mostly Jewish) residents who lived there before they fled or were deported. Across the street, a sculpture outside the old Jewish Cemetery recalls the deportations of Jews. All over Berlin and in many other cities, “Stumbling Stones” (Stolpersteine), or brass plaques with the names of victims have been set into pavements outside former dwellings of Jews and others persecuted by the Nazi regime. The artist Gunter Demnig initiated this form of commemoration.²

During the visits to the above mentioned quarters and memorials, several group members asked how Jewish life and communities had developed in Berlin: The German capital had 160,000 Jewish citizens before 1933, which was one third of the Jewish community in Germany. A total of 55,000 were murdered, 7,000 committed suicide, 90,000 managed to emigrate in time. Only 8,000 Berlin Jews survived, i.e. supported by courageous citizens who hid them.³ Today, the Jewish Community in Berlin has a population of 10,500.

1 Synagoge Oranienburger Street: www.or-synagoge.de/html/en_homepage.htm.

2 Stumbling Stones: www.stolpersteine.com/EN/home.html.

3 Jewish Community of Berlin: www.jg-berlin.org/en/about-us/history.html.

Berlin History Workshop (Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt)

The “Berlin History Workshop” (Berliner Geschichtswerkstatt) was founded in the early 1980s as a civil society initiative.¹ The idea was to research the stories and biographies of ordinary people on a local level, documenting for example how the discrimination and persecution of Jewish citizens began in everyday life. Sonja Miltenberger, Jürgen Karwelat, Andreas Bräutigam, and Lutz Sand presented some of their projects and experiences. They said that many of them are social workers or teachers. Their aim is to document history to sensitise future generations to what happened during the Nazi-era. The presentation prompted discussion on practical implications of dealing with the past.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, three different histories are circulating due to the wars of the 1990s, a member of the group explained. Children attend ethnically segregated schools and the last war is not being taught, he added. He asked how to encourage youngsters from the different sides to meet and to overcome the opposing narratives in order to build a better future. One of the activists of the history workshop mentioned the German-Polish textbook commission as a more inclusive approach towards teaching history. In a long and arduous process, the commission is working on a joint history book for secondary schools.² Another representative of the History Workshop answered that it is highly important to take any opportunity for discussion with young people. He also mentioned a German-wide project called “School without racism - school with courage”. Students at secondary schools can apply for their school to receive this designation if the school has set up activities to counter racism or to promote civil courage.³

1 Berlin history workshop: www.berliner-geschichtswerkstatt.de/.

2 German-Polish History Textbook Commission: www.gei.de/en/research/the-european-schoolhouse/europe-and-the-national-factor/german-polish-history-textbook.html.

3 Initiative “School without Racism”: www.schule-ohne-rassismus.org/, for a review in English see: www.todayszaman.com/news-240828-school-without-racism-an-effective-model-against-racism.html. Further links to initiatives against racism in Germany i.e.: www.amadeu-antonio-stiftung.de/eng/.



3.2. Feedback and reflection

On October 20th, 2012, the participants of the study tour shared their impressions in a feedback session. Several ex-combatants stressed that although visiting the memorials was very difficult, it was also very useful. In particular, the sites in Sachsenhausen and also the state security prison in Hohenschönhausen were considered “hard places”. All participants said that they had been deeply moved when they saw the crematorium in Sachsenhausen. Many painful memories had been revived. These were particularly hard to stand for a person who had been imprisoned in the Bosnian war. Several veterans said they had read a lot about the Holocaust and the Nazi regime, but entering these places had opened up new opportunities for learning about these issues. They found that the visit to the Topography of Terror served as an eye-opener to the structures of the totalitarian regime.

One of the war veterans said he would have liked to listen to the story of a Holocaust survivor, which was not included in the visit. He considered the voices of victims an important “precondition for reconciliation”. One journalist also emphasised the importance of documenting the names and personal stories of the victims. Furthermore, he stressed that there are many sites even in the region of former Yugoslavia where members of the Jewish population were exposed to atrocities during World War II, of which many remain unmarked. He mentioned, as an example, the ongoing discussion on how to deal with the Staro Sajmište, a former concentration camp established under Nazi-occupation in Belgrade.

The group discovered many parallels between experiences in Germany and the Balkans: Both went through terrible wars and transition from the socialist system to democratic states. Some of the guests were particularly impressed by the approach of the Police School in Sachsenhausen. They emphasised that training police staff appropriately is crucial to securing the rule of law in a democratic society, and that peace education and learning about the past must be part of the curriculum. Another important message and “lesson” from the study visit was that a culture of remembrance does not necessarily require big and expensive monuments. Ordinary people can undertake activities on a smaller scale and contribute to the process.

It was honoured that people in Germany have invested a lot to establish a culture of apology and dialogue, taking on political responsibility, and educating young people about the past. However, the group also learned that the dynamic of reconciliation had been quite slow in Germany. They realised that only the second generation born after 1945 had raised these issues and pushed for memorials. Many group members were convinced that it will take a long time to spread this idea in the Balkans as well.

Most participants felt empowered by the trip. By contrast, one member expressed he felt discontent with parts of the group processes and would prefer to continue working in a different frame. Others emphasised that the visit has increased their motivation. They said they had gleaned a lot of input for the work in their own communities. The workshop at the Berghof Center had prompted more exchange of information and “created some good vibrations” among the group.

One of the journalists said being part of the group had taught him that reconciliation is not an ideology. He was impressed by the diverse opinions and views expressed among group members and their ability to communicate openly with each other.

Twelve members from all the armies involved in the 1990s war in BiH, apart from Abdić's supporters, but including JNA veterans, visited sites of execution, terror and suffering from the period of Nazi rule, the Soviet regime and the DDR in Berlin. Following the inscriptions of victims of the Holocaust, looking around Soviet and East German torture chambers, remembering the victims of two totalitarianisms that divided Europe in the 20th century, the veterans of our wars told their stories about what had happened to them and to us at the end of that fateful century

"All of our armies are former," says Avdića from Brčko as we sit in the cafeteria of the Rheinland Pfalz representative office in Berlin. The purpose of the study visit of 12 war veterans from BiH and Serbia organised by the Centre for Non-Violent Action from Belgrade and Sarajevo was to visit places of execution, terror and suffering from the period of Nazi rule, the Soviet regime and the DDR. Among the group were members of all the armies in Bosnia and Herzegovina and a veteran of the former JNA, Novica, who had been wounded at the very beginning of the war in Croatia. We were only missing the armed supporters of Fikret Abdić to complete the picture of wartime chaos. War stories intertwined and latched onto each other giving the participants in the study visit a more comprehensive view of their participation in the war. Bosnian humour was the cornerstone of daily banter and it was easy to believe in the common characteristics of a BiH identity that incorporates this humour.

Veteran Novica's Story

At the end of the trip, veteran Novica told me his wartime biography as we strolled around the Tegel Airport in Berlin: "I was wounded in 1991. I was a member of auxiliary JNA units tasked with pulling tanks out if they got into trouble. There was a tank that got hit in the engine. Thick black smoke was coming out of it. From the inside, I could hear the marksman wailing, he was stuck beneath the casings puller. He couldn't get out. He panicked and couldn't find the lever to move the puller. I entered the tank through another hatch, inside it was all smoke and oil. I freed him and started towards the hatch at the dome. When I put one leg through the hatch, a sniper bullet hit me just beneath the ankle. As I was pulling my other leg from the tank, I saw a guided Malyutka missile heading for the tank. Malyutka's are quite slow, so you can spot them. I knew what would happen. The cumulative blast threw me from the tank and I landed on the asphalt lightly as if some hand had just placed me there. Then I saw my left boot was missing and I realised I had lost my leg. Later, they awarded me some medal for courage that I refused to accept, because I had not gone to Croatia to make Croats live like they wouldn't want to, and I don't need an award for being disabled. Later, I founded the Association of Serbian War Veterans for Peace, but they annulled the registration, because they didn't like the name."

As he talks, he doesn't gesticulate much with his hands, one is missing a finger. His hands are scarred by severe burns. He wears a below-the-knee prosthesis on his left leg, and a scar on his right. That's Novica's story.

The Dead Will Not Rehabilitate Us

First, we visited the Topography of Terror, a museum at the site of the Third Reich ministry of security and police buildings. The curator led us through a labyrinth of hanging photographs trying to relate an overview of the genesis of Nazi terror. Among the photographs is the famous one of Nazis saluting Hitler, all but one who has his arms crossed over his chest in protest. Beneath the photograph is the name of that man with a note saying his identity is a matter of conjecture. At one point, Ljuban, a VRS veteran, said to me, "There's Kadinjača!" When I approached the photograph, I saw it showed scenes of burning villages, faces of farmers, haystacks from



Belarus. Horror always has the same face, everywhere.

The second day we went to visit the Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe (opened for the public on 12 May 2005) located in the historical centre of the city. The monument consists of 2.711 concrete blocks – stelae. Their number has no symbolic meaning. The Field of Stelae was constructed so that it can be entered from all directions through rows of blocks that become larger as you walk along, and then in the middle of the field, you find yourself in a tunnel of dark grey blocks five meters tall. The path between the blocks is level, then it descends into a valley, leaning left or right, then it ascends. People susceptible to panic are advised not to enter the memorial. The main feeling that comes over you is one of anxiety, fear and insignificance. The labyrinth shows how insignificant human life was from 1933 to 1945 in Nazi Germany, especially if you were a Jew, a homosexual, a Roma or a Jehovah's Witness.

Beneath the Field of Stelae is a museum with an antechamber and four rooms. In the second room, called the Room of Dimensions, I cried as I sat on a white bench copying down the English translation of original journal entries and inscriptions made by Jews during the Holocaust. An unknown young man had filled the margins of a novel with accounts of the last days in the Lodz ghetto just before they were to be transported to camps at Chelmno and Auschwitz. The inscription was given in Polish, English, Yiddish and Hebrew. It showed desperation and hope, fear and a will to live. But most of all it portrayed a dreadful feeling of being lost, a naïveté so reminiscent of the beginning of the war in BiH. The young man writes how some are encouraged because they will finally be leaving the ghetto, others are looking forward to the labour camps, others still are brutally realistic and know they are going to their deaths, while some have lost all will to live and are peacefully waiting for their end. And how all these premonitions unpredictably shift within people, flickering like a dying flame. In the darkened Room of Names, the names of victims followed by years of birth and death are projected onto its four walls. A voice from behind the walls reads short biographies of those whose names are on the walls. For more than half of the 6 million murdered Jews, names and biographies are unknown. To read out the names and short biographies of all the victims, it would take 6 years, 7 months and 27 days.

Visoko, Home Sweet Home

We then visited the Hohenschönhausen memorial in Berlin, the site of the Soviet Special Camp 3 from 1945 to 1951, and then a camp for political prisoners of the East German secret police, the Stasi. Our guide was a former prisoner and gave us a detailed description of life in the prison. It is immediately clear that the Stasi prison was a three-star hotel compared to the Soviet special camp. While the Soviets foregrounded physical and psychological torture, the East Germans opted for the latter. One part of the Soviet prison was located underground and later abandoned by the East German administration. It was called the submarine, U-Boot in German. The cells there were oval and metal and had a few centimetres of water on the bottom. The punishment was to stand or sit for hours, without moving. The submarine was constantly flooded with the sound of enormous generators, and the lights were always kept on, so the prisoner had a feeling as if he would never make it up to the light of day.

The cells in the Stasi prison had a toilet bowl, wash basin, radiator, bed, window with clouded glass that light could pass through, everything Soviet prisoners could only dream of. The film *The Lives of Others* about the DDR and the Stasi secret service by Florian Henckel von Donnersmack that won the 2006 Oscar for best foreign language film was about this prison for good reason. There was no physical torture in the Stasi prison, the guards were unarmed. The walls of the corridors are still lined by wires with red connectors. The prisoner was not allowed to look at the guard, if he did so, the guard would pull on the

Excerpt from the article "The sky over Berlin", by Zoran Panović published in "Danas", 25th October 2012

With war veterans and military disabled from Bosnia and Herzegovina, I stand at the place for roll call of the camp prisoners. It is empty now. And somehow too flat. This was where once 10 or 20 thousand people in those striped uniforms stood. The geometric shape of death, the triangle, was on their uniforms. Yellow for Jews, red for communists... Wait a minute, what sort of war veterans from BiH? Those on crutches in this Mordor dust between the gravel and the shrivelled grass. And all of them together: Shoulder to shoulder, former soldiers of the Army of BiH, the Army of RS, and the HVO. They have come for a study visit with the help of the Centre for Non-Violent Action (Sarajevo – Belgrade) and the German Berghof Foundation. To learn about German traumas of facing their own history. To compare German experience with that of Bosnia. These veterans don't show off. Why would they, when they used to shoot at each other. Now they get on well, joking around when they meet. At the camp, their eyes become heavy, you could almost weigh their looks, and the heaviest are when one of them lifts a crutch to point at something and wonder how a human being could do that to another human being. Although, they're still not done wondering over Bosnia.

wire, an alarm would go off, and round red ceiling lamps would come on. Then three thugs would arrive to hold the prisoner down while a doctor administered a tranquilliser by injection. The interior of this prison is a staple of socialist romanticism from the 1980s. Cream-coloured telephones, parquet-imitation linoleum, wallpaper, heavy curtains, sparse furniture and the omnipresent bright red ceiling lamps, as well as red switches show that Germans did indeed take into account the aesthetics of the prison. At that time, the prison smelled of soap and the sanitary conditions were quite good. After visiting Sachsenhausen, most of the veterans said they would gladly serve a few months in the Stasi prison. After visiting this type of prison, the only thing a person can feel is hatred for any form of state organisation.

Ljuban, a VRS Veteran

At the Berghof Peace Institute, a round table was held on the topic of Facing the Past for a Non-Violent Future – War Veterans for Peace (experience from the Balkans and Germany). Here, the veterans told their life stories, where the war invariably occupied a central position. Ljuban, a VRS veteran, a company commander, wounded in the leg by a sniper said how he rarely says anything to his family about the war. Before the war, he was a civil engineer. He said civil engineers had a special relationship with the buildings they constructed. He had worked on constructing the Poljud stadium and other buildings in former Yugoslavia, but has been afraid to visit them since.

“How do I explain to my children that I am not a monster or a killer? Because I am not. How do I explain to them what happened? When I myself don’t know what happened?” With this, Ljuban ended his sincere and emotional story about his experience of the war and post-war living.

The youngest veteran of the BiH Army, Narcis, lost his father and brother, both members of the BiH Army, when he was 14. He talked about his experience and the feeling that he never had a childhood. When you hear this from a tall corpulent man in his thirties, you can feel the trauma suck the air out of the room and everyone finds it hard to breathe. “When I walk by a children’s playground, I sometimes feel the desire to go play myself, because I didn’t have a childhood. I never knew child’s play,” Narcis says. Then Mirko from the vicinity of Brčko spoke. He was a member of the HVO and he lost a leg in the battlefield. Mirko believes all people are good and should serve good.

It is difficult to fathom the strength of these people who are able to understand one another, to forgive and to go on with life believing in a future after everything they have been through. Their moving stories are proof that a person can rise above his pain, above himself and work for a higher, a more noble cause.

Sachsenhausen

At the entrance gate to the Nazi camp, the hands on the clock show 11:08, when the break-out of Buchenwald camp prisoners began. Our guide believes this piece of information is a myth. A police academy has been situated here since 2006. During the Nazi regime, this was a labour camp and a command for all the concentration camps in Europe. After World War II, new camp prisoners moved into the old camp: Nazis and enemies of the Soviet regime. Sachsenhausen is situated near the town of Oranienburg. The area around the camp contains mass graves from the soviet period. During the Nazi period, SS units were stationed here. This is where guards and commanders, the staff of future concentration camps, were trained. There are no mass graves from this period, because the Nazis burned the bodies of their victims depositing the ashes into underground pits that were preserved.

What is today a library used to house tanks. Today, police dogs are not used in the training because of their role in the camps, and the shooting range is soundproofed to keep passers-by from hearing the shots that could evoke the camp. Still, research studies have shown that Oranienburg is home to a not insignificant number of neo-Nazis. After a visit to the camp by Israeli Prime Ministers in 1992, the neo-Nazis tried to set fire to barrack 38 (which is part of the group called Jewish Barracks). In this camp, an experimental gas chamber of “smaller proportions” was first used. Before the chamber, people would undergo a medical examination and be marked by pen if they had gold teeth or other precious metals implanted in their bodies – they would be shot in the execution pit. Death by gas poisoning is not instantaneous, people suffocate to their death in the most dreadful agony over 10 to 20 minutes. The pain is so severe that people break their own bones. The bodies are then loaded into the crematoria.

There were about 300 people in a barrack. Three grown men shared a single cot. They received 300 grams of bread and half a litre of water per day. They slept from 10 p.m. to 3:30 a.m. The rest of their time they spent working. As we walk through the camp, cranes fly overhead letting out hoarse shrieks. In the nearby forests they gather into large flocks and fly off to Africa.

The lifespan of a camp prisoner was 6 to 8 weeks.

The careers of many SS officers began here and ended in Auschwitz, Treblinka... Officers had good quality living at the camps. One of the preserved buildings is a Casino where films were screened, theatre performances put on, concerts held. This is where the SS rested after a day of killing people. The majority of those killed here, a rough estimate of 35000, were Soviet prisoners of war. It is presumed that Stalin's son was among them. During the Soviet special camp for denazification (1945 – 1952) 12000 people died here of starvation, disease and exposure.

I was fascinated by the slag at Apelplatz (the place of roll-call) in Sachsenhausen with a shoot of grass breaking through here and there. The colour of the earth and the horror of the open space that could accommodate some twenty thousand people. The wind now blows across it as visitors to the Memorial walk through. The cranes fly in irregular V formations, almost like signs by the road, and their shrieks will remind me of the shadows of prisoners walking in Apelplatz at dusk. From here you could only "rise in smoke to the sky". This verse from Paul Celan's poem Death Fugue best explains the dread you can still feel as you walk across the slag of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

Excerpt from the article "Berlin Miniatures", by Faruk Šehić published in bh. news magazin "Dani", 26th October 2012

And so we talked about various events from the war, we members of warring armies in the forever liberated Berlin. The poetess with the bloody lips hung on the wall. Tucholsky was sad and alone on a newspaper page. Blood flowed in the plates, and the stories of former warriors Serbs, Croats, Bosniaks, Bosnians, people from Posavina, Krajina, Serbia. Special units from Prnjavor were crossed with brigades from Zavidovići, HVO forces with those of the BiH Army from the Brčko Corridor, the 1st and 5th Crops with all the German divisions stuck in the mud of heavenly Stalingrads. Tangles of actions, defeats and "victories" became untangled, missing pieces of the puzzle accidentally came together into whole stories. Berlin whizzed through space like Captain Picard's photon torpedo. It glowed like a vast tentacled island, safe and untouchable. We too were at that island, mostly a group of hardened Bosnians and Krajina folk, with brandy and sevdah in our eyes. There is something to those war stories that ordinary folk who dread blood, mud, tears and pus will never understand. Something superhumanly great and inexpressible. Something akin to a fascinating sorrow a hundred storeys high. Something stronger than steel and warmer than cotton. But that's another story.

in cooperation with
Berghof Foundation

supported by
German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
KURVE Wustrow
Heinrich Böll Stiftung

nenasilje.org