



U · N · I · T · E

THE CITIZENS THE NATIONS

Reports from the hCa Assembly

19-22 October 1995

Tuzla, Bosnia-Herzegovina

“On that day we’ll say to Hell, ‘Have you had enough?’ And the Hell will answer, ‘is there more?’”

Mesa Selimovic

Dervis I Smrt, 1966

How to find words, how to speak about the war crimes and the genocide perpetrated in Bosnia-Herzegovina? How to listen to the victims, how to avoid the silence of the slaughterer’s absence, how to face the emptiness of our lives, of our world? Night over Europe, nightmares in our heart. This was left unsaid, but I’m sure these feelings were and are still present in every one of us. The intensive debates we had may also be seen as an attempt to hide our torments, to cover our sensitiveness, to mask the evidence that “our words have to be signs of revolt and calls for fight as long as evil is in this world” (Mesa Selimovic).

A range of important issues were opened, among them:

- (1) The work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was seen as a prerequisite to any real peace in the region; the individual responsibility, but also the political and moral responsibility of the implicated leadership must be clearly established. The ICTY points out also the necessity of an International Criminal Court, able to judge all cases of genocide, all war crimes and all crimes against humanity. Therefore, a monitoring program of the ICTY is a relevant initiative.
- (2) Cooperation of the states but also of the NGOs in collecting evidence and sharing it with the Tribunal must be developed. Civic groups have to lobby continually for this and push

the national justice systems (both in Europe and in the republics of the former Yugoslavia) to work with the Tribunal (ICTY).

- (3) There is a substantial vacuum of information: the Tribunal is largely unknown to those within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, its legitimacy, its proceedings (...).
- (4) There is a necessity to rebuild an independent judicial system. Civil society has to promote projects in this filed.
- (5) The protection and support of victims is fundamental, the ongoing projects have to be implemented, networked and sustained. The concrete fieldwork must be promoted with the commitment of the jurists and human rights activists in all republics of the former Yugoslavia. Particular attention should also be given to the issue of communication between local ngo workers and the Tribunal.

The focus on some case studies opened quite pragmatic discussions, which resulted in the linkage of political and abstract issues to fieldwork. Of course, time was too short; the issue too big and some understandable organizational problems perturbed our work. Therefore the initiative of the Human Rights Office Tuzla, which will organize a follow-up conference, is very welcome.

Christophe Solioz

[Reprint from the original report, pp. 26-27]