

David Last and Konstanty Gebert both pointed out the importance of civil society in impeding the spread of violence. The war did not sweep like wildfire across the country. On the contrary, it had to be re-kindled again and again in different places. Sometimes the sparks fell on "wet wood" that resisted the war for a year or more at a time. For example, a factory staffed by a harmonious group of ethnically mixed workers was able to take care of its members and protect them from being "ethnically cleansed." The strength of the independent non-governmental sector is a direct measure of the possibility for individual citizens to control the circumstances of their lives. The legacy of communism was the weakness of civil society. Nationalism in power fully embraces that weakness as its strength.

#### Lessons about Civil Society

Governments and the non-governmental sectors of democratic societies can encourage the transition from totalitarianism or authoritarianism in such places as Yugoslavia by supporting and heartily recognizing the movements of citizens who carry on public activities independently from the state. Investment in peace-building activities is far cheaper and more effective than military intervention. Encourage civil society; it is the best hope for the future of democracy and human rights. Local non-governmental organizations should affiliate to transnational organizations, for they can offer support from abroad beyond the reach of totalitarian governments.

## II EFFORTS TO STOP THE WAR AND REBUILD PEACE

Two schools of thought were represented at the conference concerning how the war could have been stopped earlier. Some argued for early military intervention, while others (notably Jan Oberg) expressed a conviction that violence never solves a conflict — that the only true and lasting solution involves reconciliation and mediation in which the needs of all sides are respected. I shall first report the pacifist views expressed by professional mediators, NGO activists, and humanitarian workers.

### The Conflict Resolution Approach

Many non-governmental groups foresaw the crisis and tried to avert it. For example, Sonja Licht led a group of 500 Yugoslavs and citizens of 13 countries on a peace caravan through her country in

on these projects than does the United States government.

September 1991, as the fighting in Croatia was about to reach its peak. Although under-reported, domestic anti-war protests continued throughout the whole war. Activists organized inter-ethnic dialogues, struggled for civic pluralism, and supported conscientious objectors. They proposed the establishment of a U.N. protectorate over Bosnia and Herzegovina, and opposed the recognition of nation states based purely on ethnic identities. They argued within the international peace movement that principles of democracy should not be subordinated to the principle of self-determination.

Serbian activists collected 80,000 signatures on a petition demanding that nobody should be mobilized to fight outside the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which was by then reduced to Serbia and Montenegro. When the shelling began in Sarajevo in May 1992, 100,000 citizens demonstrated in Belgrade demanding that the Bosnian Serb Army cease firing on the city. There were public candle-lighting ceremonies throughout the war, and a variety of groups persisted, such as the Women in Black of Serbia, the Civic Forum of Tuzla, the Center for Cultural Decontamination in Belgrade — groups which Licht calls "islands of civility." An internal peace movement cannot develop, she said. To be successful the peace movement needs a transnational framework.

Licht also pointed out that the comprehensive economic sanctions that were imposed on Serbia have only supported the status quo and the power of the ruling elite. The sanctions cut off those people who were struggling for change, isolating Serbian civil society from the rest of the world.

Yugoslav peace activists tried to mobilize international public opinion and the international media. They failed. For example, the international press barely mentioned the anti-war rock concerts and massive demonstrations that took place in Belgrade.

Besides the Yugoslav anti-war dissidents, there were foreign humanitarian organizations that came to bring relief supplies and to offer inter-ethnic community-building services. Some were more successful than others. Dorie Wilsnack reviewed some of these projects and concluded that the most important factor influencing success was whether they were invited by, and maintained a continuing partnership with, local people. Even humanitarianism is not appreciated when it appears to be imposed.

Jan Oberg expressed a similar view. As a conflict-resolution expert, he insists on addressing the conflicts that underlie wars. He maintains that it is no good to impose solutions on people against their will. Not only did he criticize foreign