

Ferien vom Krieg

Steps toward the Concrete Utopia of a Peaceful World

1996: Three children from the hostile entities in Bosnia show where they come from.



"My father has been missing since 1995, and my mother is very sick. People wanted to expel us out of Banja Luka. I have lost trust in mankind." Kata, 14, from Banja Luka.

"Before the war our town was the most beautiful in Bosnia. Now it has been burned down and divided. I had to flee to another part of the city. Here, we are again together and even with children of other nationalities." Lelja, age 13, from Gornji Vakuf.

"It helps a lot to know that someone cares about me. I have made Serbian and Croatian friends here. These children didn't kill my father...whoever it was couldn't know what he did." Alma, from Tuzla.

"During the war we spent most of the time hiding in a cellar. When I hear loud noises I become afraid and think immediately of the war and the explosions." Elvisa, age 12, from Tuzla.

"Someday I want to be the one who can help others like you are doing now-" Adnan, from Banja Luka.

1997: Idriz and Nermis

Idriz comes from an orphanage in Banja Luka (Serbian Republic). Nermis lives in an orphanage in Tuzla (Bosnian Federation). Both became close friends. Both are in the same age, sixteen years old! Nermis has a lack of special growth-hormons. When he was a child this could have been treated. There was no-one who cared for a small boy's problems: It was a bitter process for them to realize what they said one day: **"In theory it is possible that my father killed your father or that your father killed my father. Now we both are orphans. What a madness war is!"**





1999: The most sensitive project was a group with children and educators coming from Srebrenica. This means: "Muslim children", who were deported from Srebrenica in 1995 had vacations together with Serbian children, now living in Srebrenica - mostly refugees from the area of Sarajevo.

We were afraid. But everybody was deeply impressed. This camp really was of high symbolic importance for peace developing in Bosnia.

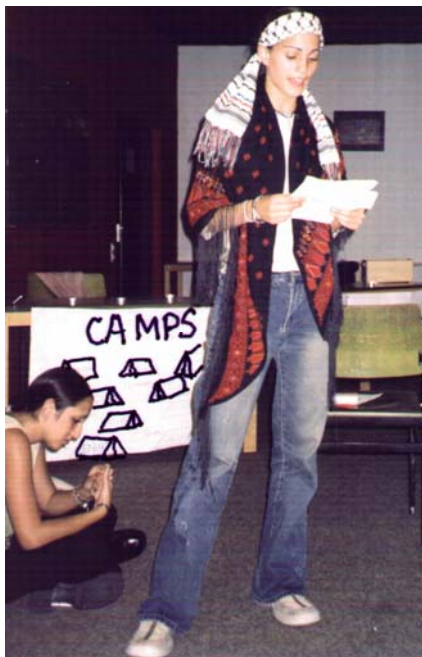
Olja is a facilitator. Her husband and son were murdered in Srebrenica. She was tortured by Serbian neighbours before she could flee to Tuzla. In the summer-camp she suddenly noticed the child of the perpetrator. She said to herself all day long: "It is just a child and innocent!"

In the last years we raised the age-group and changed the concept to more peace-educational workshops. The former participants meet in a self-administered camp and plan joint actions.



They print on white T-Shirts Slogans like: "All different – all equal!", "Why should we make a difference?" and wear it for example on a certain day in the schools or divided cities.

With the beginning of the **Second Intifada**, we decided to spread our practice in civil conflict solution on a grassroots level to another complicated conflict area.



The Palestinian group shows the fate of the refugees in a sketch. On a Friday night young people from Israel and Palestine are preparing Challa together, the special bread for the Jewish dinner ceremony. (Kabbalat Schabbat).



We came in contact with Keren, a young woman from Israel and Rami, a young man from Palestine, who had met by chance on the Japanese peace-boat. After many open discussions they noticed the surprising fact that they agreed on many difficult questions. They decided to tell their friends at home about this unique experience. They did.

The same summer they each came with 24 friends for an encounter to Germany. They founded the Initiative "Breaking Barriers". Since then they have brought over 70 friends of friends from the Westbank and 70 friends of friends from Israel each year.

In addition, 40 women come together each summer in order to discuss the conflict under the perspective of gender.

Both were honoured with the „Mount-Zion-Peace-Award“ for the meetings of young Israeli and Palestinians during the “Vacations from War“

Hava Beller is a filmmaker from NYC. Since 2004 she made many efforts to document the process of a Vacation-from-War seminar in a film. But most of the groups didn't agree to be taped together. After three years building on trust she participated in a seminar, and at least she succeeded. In summer 2007 she came with a camera team to Germany and afterwards visited the participants at home in Israel and Palestine.



A Dialogue starts with listening

Participants from Israel just can come to the meetings. The Palestinians need an invitation and a Visa for Europe. They have many difficulties to pass the check-points and with a special allowance the border to Jordan.





Young Israelis and Palestinians look for an exit out of the. Labyrinth



Youngsters from Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo are collecting signatures under the children's Peace-Appeal.



A public Peace Performance in a divided Bosnian town was a great success for the youngsters from all entities of Bosnia, from Croatia and Serbia



- Toward the end of the seminar in which Israeli and Palestinian young people took part, model
- **“peace negotiations”** between the parties were simulated. In these negotiations, none of the most controversial points (borderline, the status of Jerusalem, questions about refugees) were left out, as they are in all official peace

negotiations to date.

The results are less important than the social process between the ‘delegates’.



WE WANT TO BUILD BRIDGES - NO WALLS



FOUR STRONG WOMEN FROM ISRAEL AND PALESTINE WHO COMES FROM WHERE?

Nearly 200 young people from Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia visited the "Blood and Honey" exhibition containing war photographs. A boy wrote, "In these days for the first time I was forced to think about the violence in the war. Facing all the crime and victims I wanted to condemn one side. But for the first time I saw that perpetrators can also be victims and victims can become perpetrators. What is the result of all the hell we went through? Prejudice and hatred like before the war and new borders between us!





Elai:

I learned a lot during these two weeks about confronting the past and the present to ensure a better future. I believe that peace will eventually come, but for that to happen both sides need to let go of some past deeds and look towards the future with a cleaner slate of mutual understanding and cooperation. I hope it's just a matter of time until that happens.

In the end of the Cultural Evening all sang together: "There must be another way!"



After the "Vacation from War" in Germany, one group visited together the Wall and started symbolic "Breaking Barriers".