

## **Vacation from war**

### **Excerpts from children's letters to the donors**

#### **2005 NEUM (Bosnian Enclave at the Mediterranean Sea)**

Camp with 86 young people from Tuzla (Muslims), Sombor (Serbs, Orthodox), Vukovar (Croatia, Roman Catholics), Banja Luka, Gornji Vakuf (divided town between Muslims and Croats like Mostar)



Dear friends,

We want to thank you for all you do for us. Come to the seaside was only a dream for us, because of our parent's economical situation.

But now we are here, meeting new friends, doing interesting workshops organized by our teamers, discussing and relaxing on the beach.. Some of us listen musics, some of us are playing games, and we all have great fun here.

With your donation you help that children from different nationalities meet and get close to each other. We try to love not to hate each other like it was here during the war.

A big THANK YOU in the name of all children from Osijek and Sombor.

Bezdan and Stanisic, 16 years old boys from Bosnia and Serbia

Dear Friends,

We write you from Neum. Everything is great here, we learn so much and we meet many new friends.

This letter is written to you by two persons who fell in love, but from different towns (and ethnies). Our meeting was classic, we looked each other into the eyes and it happened

We were chosen by our teachers as creative and very actif members of our youth centers. We did not expect such good friends that we found here. The days are running and soon we have to go

back. But we are so happy that we had the chance to meet each other and also many new friends, and all that THANKS TO YOU!!!

Marko and Dina

Dear Donors,

We would like to thank you for making this summer vacation possible for us. We like Neum so much and we met a lot of friends.

We also visited Korcula and Dubrovnik, and saw a lot of old houses completely made from marble. In Dubrovnik we were amazed by the beautiful old city walls. We made a rally to explore Dubrovnik. We prefered Knezev Dvor, a historical building used in former times as a court house and a dungeon.

Tamara from Becki Monostor (Serbia)

Dear Donor,

With your generosity you make it possible for children of the war countries in the Balkans to come together. For 2 weeks we are living together in Neum, the only seaside of Bosnia.

In our camp we are young people from Sombor (Serbia), Vukovar (Croatia), Banja Luka, Tuzla, Gornji Vakuf-Uskoplje (Bosnia). They are great. We have much fun together.

But it isn't just fun. We learn a lot from each other. I am very glad to be here.

I want to THANK YOU !!!

Natasha, 16 years old girl from Sombor

Dear Donors,

If you respond to this letter, not just that you have listened to one young man, but you have also helped to spread the mission of peace in the Balkans and in the whole world. You will ask yourself, "why mission of peace in the Balkans"? The war is over, but only formally, we have war every day – man making war with other man, man making war with his environment, man having war with himself.

People in the Balkans still can't feel the peace, especially old people who have survived even two wars during their life time. That is why we, young people, are always in conflict with our environment. No matter how positive we think and how hard we try to build a better future, there are always the local or regional offices which make limits and hold us back. Then we are in the situation that we don't trust our neighbours. Moreover there are always misjudgements of people by their names, nationalities and religion.

Well isn't religion a private thing? Isn't it supposed to connect us, not to tear us apart? There is no God that tells you to hate other people, so why do we think of such absurdities? So once again, a young man comes to have conflicts with himself: Inwhom can he trust, what to hope for?

That is why we are part of this summer „peace camp“, to show everybody that we love other people, love their smiles and jokes, we are full of positive energy and enthusiasm to change things.

Personally, I want to give my part, because I want to sleep in peace, to dream in peace, I want to go to school in peace and live my life in peace. I come to this camp to represent a local peace organisation as a communicative person, who is also very ambitious and wants to change things.

I made wonderful friends with young people from other countries, people of different nationalities, which was an experience I could never imagine before. I realised that beside all differences we are all human beings who hope for the same – peace and union. Living and learning together in the camp we realise: we are all different but the same. We like yellow or white colors, some of us enjoy dancing or sports. Music united us in the camp. To cut a long story short: those are the only differences between us. That is why we all want to make peace in the world. I hope for the future, that young people will not go by the footprints of their fathers. I am sure that they will build a brighter future in peace! I shall continue to fight for my dreams.

At the end a few words about me:

My name is Anida and I was born in June 1987. I like music, singing and dancing.

All the best, Anida, 18 years old girl from Zivinice

Dear Donor,

Please read patiently my letter.

First of all I would like to express my opinion about this summer peace camp and peace in general. I have to be honest. When I came to this camp I had some prejudices. I lost my father in that damned war, so I used to see people differently.

But I am so glad that I got the chance to change my prejudices! This camp has influenced me positively, so I see all from a different side now. For me this project was very successful. And you play a very important part in my story, dear donor! By your generous donation you make possible such developments of young people. You help us to discover a better side of life. Thank you.

Peace is the most important thing for the human race. If we want to be happy, live together with our family, with dear friends no matter who they are, which religions they believe in, no matter which name they have, no matter what their parents have done or didn't do, we just should live in peace, be tolerant, support democracy.

In this summer camp I realized that we, children and young people, should evolve and build our personalities with solidarity. We should implant it in our minds and never let it get out.

I hope, my new friends have also realized this, so we shall continue all together what we started here, breaking those walls that some evil people have built between us.

I hope that you patiently read my letter.

You are doing a great job. I just admire people like you. Please, continue this great peace project!

All the best, Inela

Inela, 17 years old girl from Sombor (Serbia)

Dear Donors,

Are you ready for the bare truth? I like peace.

In the next few sentences I will try to explain why I started this letter with this simple question and answer. Well the first reason was just to intrigue you, so you can patiently read the rest of this letter.

When I first heard of this project „Vacation from war“ I was thrilled, because I really needed a vacation from war. You can't really understand peace and appreciate it, if you didn't live through the war. I was 5 years old, when this „Horror Movie“ started in Bosnia, and of course, as most of the people, I was totally unprepared for it and I keep in my mind the most unpleasant experiences of my life. I don't want to call them back now.

During this summer peace camp here in Neum positive experiences overcome the negative ones of my past. I don't even know where to begin. If somebody had told me 10 years ago that I should meet teenagers from Serbia and Montenegro or Republic of Srpska, I would probably have regarded him for crazy. But now I see things differently and I am so glad. First of all I see myself, my future and one day perhaps my own family here in Bosnia differently. Tolerance should be the word that characterizes my country. I can't imagine myself living elsewhere than here, in this war destroyed country called Bosnia or a.k.a. "Black Hole of Europe". I was raised in a way to like my country, to be a patriot, but at the same time as tolerant as possible. My mission here is to finish my education successfully and then help my country with all my knowledge

When I first heard about the concept of „Vacation from war“ I was intrigued. I wasn't familiar with the organisation and couldn't imagine people donating money for youngsters of the Balkans. So my first goal here was to find that out. My friend Mela and I decided to make an interview with Wilfriede Dieter (german coordinator) and publish all informations in our camp's newspaper „Neumorni“, just to enlighten our friends about how does everything function. When we talked to Wiede, we were shocked. The donors are „normal people who just happen to have little more money than they really need.

Honestly, I admire those people and I just want to say one big THANK YOU! Your money wasn't wasted and if you could only imagine what a great time we had here, you would be more than pleased with what you have done for us. If your mission was, to do something good for PEACE, then, I assure you, your mission was fulfilled.

All the best, Alisa

Alisa, 17 years old girl from Tuzla (Bosnia, Bosnian Croatian Federation)