

16.5.2005

Vanja Nedic

I just want to say that the time I spent in Drvenik/Croatia in summer 2003 changed my whole life. Now I am a member of several peace groups in Vukovar and meanwhile I went to some peace camps but Drvenik was my first and I will remember it for the rest of my life. Thank you for that..

The house in Drvenik was pretty small for more than hundred kids. But this was good for us because we were altogether all the time. One thing that I remember with all my love is a game called Secret Friend which we played, I loved it so much that even now I'm doing it with my class in school.. I also remember our leaders and the team from Germany. They all had so much patience with us. I mean it's a hard job to have control over 100 teens from hostile areas, but they managed it very good. In Drvenik for the first time in my life I was able to be what I really am without fear of somebody's reaction or judgement. Also in my family we have problems: My mom is Croatian and my dad is Serbian -so the both sides are taking pressure on me, not by purpose (they don't even know that they are doing so) but I can feel it. Don't misunderstand me- they don't fight, they are getting along well but sometimes when they disagree they put me in the middle, and I don't like it. I don't want to choose sides. I must say that I really liked Shiatsu-massage- I even slept during the session, it's so relaxing .

Two weeks ago my friend and me guided a project called: "Young Artists for Vukovar". It was great, a lot of people showed up and enjoyed it. We also founded a peace-group named RAINBOW, we already have more than 50 members, all young people that want to change everything what's wrong in our community and we don't care about small differences between us. This is only a small part of what Drvenik changed in my life. My dream is to meet all the friends again.

There was no particular occasion in the camp because the whole camp was a special occasion for me. Thank you for that.

Banjaluka, November 2005

MY STORY

by Zlata Veselinovic

I just came back from Sarajevo...full of different emotions.

As you know it is still very unusual for Serbian people from Banja Luka to go in the other part of Bosnia – especially to Sarajevo. I wasn't really afraid but I must confess that I had ambivalent feelings.

On the one hand I felt honored to be invited to the International Conference “Youth of BiH, -make your own future!” with some prominent politicians and pop-stars because I'm active in NGO sector last year more than ever and also working in the Media.

On the other hand I thought there will be no one that I know. I was a little bit frightened to meet strange and perhaps hostile people.

But in the first minute I heard somebody calling my name in that crowd. It was such a good feeling to hear a familiar voice - I can not exactly explain this feeling of not being alone, acceptance and luck in a strange surrounding.

Then we met more of the teachers and youngsters who took part in the project “Ferien vom Krieg” and immediately we felt as a group among the 500 participants of the conference. It was very interesting to meet the young activists from Bosnia (BiH, Serbian Republika and Federation), who have some ideas how to make Bosnia and Herzegovina a better place for living. Most of them are already doing something and have a kind of vision for BiH.

After the speeches we chose some workshops for the afternoon (education in BiH, NGOs and marketing, self-employment, developing cultural and social sector...).

But this event was important for me because of something else – my feeling -like celebrating a family-meeting. But to really understand this feeling that I had in that moment you have to go back in the past with me...to go back 6 years...

Zivogosce, August 2000.

A 14 years old girl, me, came for the first time to the sea side. Thanks to the Donors I got the opportunity to be one of many children who were invited to “Vacation from War” organized by the German *Komitee* already for some years.

I could write so much about my first summer camp...how many friends from all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and from other countries I met, how much I have learned and about nice things that happened to me, there isn't enough space for writing, but so many nice memories.

Fact is: This experience changed my life. It showed me some new values and principles which still guide me through life. I got the exceptional chance to take part a second time. I could find new hope and enough strength to keep going further through life.

This enabled me to become an assistant and translator. I now was part of the great team, trying to show the new generation that this special experience can change the life...

Today, as a student of Social work at the University of Banja Luka, one of the active members of local NGOs, and also one of the cofounders of a new NGO, I look in the future with optimism and with enough hope and strength for trying to make a better tomorrow. And I know that I'm not alone...I know that somewhere nearby are all those friends and very important persons to me...and I'm grateful

Therefore in the past few years I became very active in sectors related with non-government organisation, and most of all in sector of protecting Human Rights, especially for the kids and young people.

On that conference, after years, I met some of the people that became very important to me, who left a mark in my life. I saw many good friends from the summer camp project *Ferien vom Krieg*. We all were in the same place on the same day, with the same goal, with the wish to make our dreams true, dreams that we know could become reality. We have the vision to change something in our lives, and we want to show what we have learned together in those summer camps, and to try to give a hope to others like someone before had given hope to us...

We all were on the same place in the right time, happy because we are once again together, and because in that moment we all knew we are not alone- there is someone who really understands us.

In the end I just want to say that I'm still in contact with most of the children and teachers of my group. I think about how much this summer camp means to them, not just because they never ever would have a chance to come at the sea side but also to get the chance to meet the "others". Please give more young people the chance for this experience. Especially those kids from small towns around Banja Luka need help. They are living in horrible places are very poor, or those who had some tragedy in their lives.

Anyway if you need any help you can count on me. I just want to inform you that I'm starting my own NGO called 'Bosnia Express' with few more people because I want to try to change something and all you people of the project are my inspiration...

So if you need any help I'm here!

I had the chance to be a part of the project *Ferien vom Krieg*, where I met all those good people...and all thanks to people that helped and still are helping directly or indirectly. This project *Ferien vom Krieg* is not something that lasts only for 2 weeks, it's not only a nice memory of a beautiful summer. It's a moment which has power to change the lives of all participants!

Dedicated to all of you who changed my life

And all of you who helped that this project *Ferien vom Krie* is still alive today!

In the end, please give my greetings to all others...

With love,

Zlata