

# solidarnost je naša snaga

## **Solidarity with war refugees**

### **TEA, NOT BOMBS! TEA, NOT WALLS!**

February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2017.

It is not only for New Year that 'Slovenians' come to Belgrade from Ljubljana to have a smashing time on river restaurants, at turbofolk parties, eating cabbage rolls, kebabs and drinking brandy... That is how the tabloids describe them.

Neither the tabloids nor the few remaining independent media write about the others who come here from Slovenia. Solidarity and non-violence is no news!

Jelka has arrived in our city. Our friend from anti-war times. Back then, in 1996, she came with her friends to Novi Sad, to our conference of women solidarity against war/International Women in Black Network. Afterwards, Jelka devoted herself passionately and persistently to the struggle for the rights of the 'deleted' in Slovenia. We met in Ljubljana, in October 2016, in the social center 'Rog', a former bicycle factory, squatted by social movements and turned into an epicenter of anti-fascist/anti-racist resistance in Ljubljana and the entire region. The social center 'Rog' provides shelter for those who have been deprived of the right to a choice, just like during the wars of the nineties in the area of the former Yugoslavia. Nowadays, these are war refugees/fugitives from the Middle East. 'Rog' is the safest place for 'fugitives' throughout Slovenia.

Andreja and Nika came to the city along with Jelka. They rented an apartment opposite the railway station, so as to be close at hand to the 'fugitives', to make them some tea, or hot soup... Men come to that apartment in small groups, to gather strength, or have a bath...

The feminist ethics of care and responsibility. And feminist justice, because "justice is always starting out from the Face, from the responsibility for the other" (*Emanuel Levinas*).

That day, on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> February, I met Jelka at the hangars/shacks/camps behind the bus station. Then we went to the apartment with the fugitives. I had brought some teas – black, green, mint leaves, knowing they prefer them to teabags. Together with fugitives from diverse meridians of the Near and Middle East, we prepared tea. Strong black tea, and green tea mixed with mint, with quite a lot of sugar. When we couldn't understand one another well, we said "inshallah" or "mashallah".

They are unwilling to talk about the horrors they experienced on their journey. They have no words to express that, no way to name those things. They testified about violence at the borders – being beaten, robbed of their money, and even clothes and shoes. That Europe seemed to be out of reach ... And then they talked about their plans and dreams. They haven't given up the dream about Europe, if only they could make it to that Europe, most of them to Germany, some to Belgium...

We spoke about Trump, and altogether we voiced our conviction that he is crazy and dangerous, like the 'Taliban', says of of the fugitives.

Jelka, Nika, Andreja, Barbara, Mojca, Metka and Janez... and so many others arrive in Belgrade in waves, heading for the camps/hangars/shacks. To meet up with the fugitives. Weaving tender threads of care, spreading networks of disobedience to the tower of Europe, skipping walls... With Jelka, Nik, Barbara, Andrea, Mojca ... with the human community of sensitive and responsible activists from Slovenia, Croatia, Germany... a different Europe is possible!

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