Out of the Cages:
A Narrative of the Life and Work of Svetlana Kijevčanin of Serbia

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Acronyms

CAA	Center for Antiwar Action
CEDEUM	Center for Drama in Education and Art
DEM	Deutschemarks
DOS	Democratic Opposition of Serbia
FRY	Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
GWC	Goodwill Classroom
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
IFOR	International Fellowship of Reconciliation
JNA	Yugoslav People's Army
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SPO	Serbian Renewal Movement
SPS	Socialist Party of Serbia
SRS	Serbian Radical Party
TIE	Theater in Education
UMCOR	United Methodist Committee on Relief
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
USIP	United State Institute of Peace

Out of the Cages

She exited the building of the British embassy in Budapest, Hungary, quickly boarded an airport minibus, and collapsed onto the seat, exhausted from the ordeal. “But at least I’m out of Serbia,” she thought.

As soon as she had presented her letter of support from Vesna Pešić, the founder of the Center for Antiwar Action (CAA),[1] and her invitation letter from Neil and Ewa, her close friends in London, the consular officer pounded her with questions: “What is your affiliation with the Center?” “What does Milošević think of your antiwar activities?” “Who are you going to see in England?” “Your salary is only 4 deutschemarks (DEM) per month. How did you afford the 700 DEM ticket?”

For three hours, she steadily answered his questions in her, at that time, rusty English. She initially thought the British official would be sympathetic to her, a simple civilian from Belgrade who just wanted to visit friends in England. But by his hostile interrogation, she could tell he did not see a Serb suffering under the regime of Slobodan Milošević, or a civilian reeling from the effects of the economic, social, and cultural isolation of a closed country at war with its neighbors.[2] He simply labeled her a Serb: the aggressor, the warmonger. By the end of the three hours, however, perhaps he saw her desperation; perhaps he realized that with the borders closed in Serbia, she must have had a difficult time getting to Budapest. The officer finally granted her a visa and sent her on her way.

[1] The CAA in Belgrade was the first nongovernmental organization (NGO) devoted to peace in what is now the former Yugoslavia. It has changed its name to the Center for Peace and Democracy Development.

[2] At this time, the summer of 1993, the republic of Serbia in Yugoslavia had been at war with the neighboring republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina since 1992. In 1991, Serbia had also fought a ten-day war with Slovenia, and a war with Croatia, which ended in a ceasefire in early 1992. Because of these wars, the international community placed economic sanctions on what was then still Yugoslavia, and the republic of Serbia was effectively isolated. The wars in the former Yugoslavia will be discussed further in the story.

It was midweek in the capital, a busy working day in 1993, but the minibus was virtually empty except for a man sitting a couple of rows in front of her. She stared out the window, imagining what it was going to be like to be reunited with Neil and Ewa, friends she had not seen since 1988; with Diana Francis of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), her "peace guru" who had recently broadened her world with ideas of nonviolence and peaceful conflict resolution; and with her brother who had emigrated to the United Kingdom just two years earlier to avoid being drafted for Milošević's army. The trip was intended to remind her that there was a world beyond Serbia, a place where people could still communicate and live together without resorting to violence, where relationships were not based on power but on respect and tolerance. She was looking forward to seeing her friends and family, but the episode at the embassy dampened an otherwise sunny summer day in Budapest.

She took her eyes from the window as the bus driver entered the aisle to verify his occupants' documents and passports. The man in front of her handed his dark blue passport to the driver as her own heart dropped to her stomach: he was Croatian, the "first live Croat" she had seen since Croatia declared its independence in 1991 and war began with Serbia. She knew she "had to do something with this.

> I knew there were all these bad feelings about what was happening in our countries, but we were so closed from everything in Serbia, so I didn't really know what was happening. We were out of the cage, so I just thought, 'I need to get in touch with this guy.'[3]

As they got off the minibus, she gathered her courage and touched the man on the shoulder. "I think that we can speak the same language," she said in Serbo-Croatian, but with a distinctly Serbian accent.

He glanced over his shoulder and replied in his own regional accent, "I don't think so."

[3] All quotations not cited in the text or footnotes are taken from interviews with or presentations by Svetlana Kijevčanin between September 19 and November 10, 2006.

"What? Why don't you think so?" she pressed.

Already exasperated, the man said, "Listen, I can tell that you're from Serbia, so trust me, we cannot communicate."

Her third comment became a confrontation. "Why are you or why am I responsible for what is taking place in our countries? We are not responsible. Why is it wrong to talk to each other?"

"If my friends from Croatia discover that I spoke with a Serbian girl, they will kill me," he answered, flashing a piercing look her direction.

She refused to back down and exclaimed, "But we are not in our countries, we are in Hungary! You are not with your friends. No one has to know about this, so, why can't we communicate?"

Her persistence softened him slightly. "OK, you win."

As they began walking and talking through the airport, they realized they would both be passing through Amsterdam, she on her way to London, and her new Croatian acquaintance on his way to Rotterdam. They boarded the plane, and just as on the minibus, it was virtually empty. But like "good pioneers under Tito," they consulted their boarding passes for their assigned seats. He sat in his seat near the front, while she made her way to her seat in the rear of the plane. It was not until the plane was in the air and the seatbelt sign was off that they asked the flight attendant if, with all the empty seats, they could sit by each other.

In the course of their conversation on the flight to another neutral country, they discovered that they were similar ages; that he was a water polo player and had traveled to Serbia several times for training and games, and that he knew all the famous Serbian players; that she had grown up in Split along the Dalmatian coast in Croatia and that while her husband was

serving his military duty, she had spent over a month on Korčula Island, the Croat man's home; that he loved Kopaonik, a ski resort in Serbia, very close to her weekend house on the mountain of Golija.

During a break in the conversation, she asked the flight attendant for two glasses of water and a spoon. She then pulled a small jar from her purse and unscrewed the lid. Wild strawberries, dense forests, the mountains of central Serbia—the wave of scents came over him. It was *slatko*, a traditional jam of Serbia, prepared by boiling whole fruit, water, and sugar. Her mother-in-law, who lived on Golija part of the year, made delicious slatko—meaning "sweet"—from tiny wild strawberries from the mountain. One spoonful of slatko is typically served with *rakija*, the local brandy, as a gesture of hospitality in the Balkans; water would have to suffice on the plane ride. She brought small jars to give her hosts when she arrived in England, but this simple gesture of sharing slatko with the Croatian man would fulfill all her hopes for this trip, her first outside of Serbia since the beginning of war.

The plane reached Amsterdam all too soon in her opinion. Her next flight was not for a few more hours, so she walked her new friend to his departure gate. He grinned again and said in the Dalmatian dialect, "What I can tell you is, if you are ever in Korčula, try to find me. My name is Žarko Kovačić." She returned his smile and the dialect she still knew from childhood: "What I can tell you is, if you are ever in Belgrade, try to find me. I will be there for you. My name is Svetlana Kijevčanin."

Lights in the Darkness

She was unconventional from the beginning. In a dark Belgrade winter, on December 21, 1963, Svetlana, whose name means "light" or "bright," was born to Zlata and Đorđe Trajković in Serbia in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). The SFRY, now commonly referred to as the former Yugoslavia, emerged out of World War II and was composed of six republics: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Serbia, with two provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina. Josip Broz Tito ruled the country first as premier, then as president, since its inception in 1945. Though he rose to power by suppressing virtually all opposition, as leader of the new SFRY he emphasized the slogan "Brotherhood and Unity," an expression that sought to capture the commonalities of the multiple ethnicities constituting the republics and provinces. All were "Yugoslavs" under Tito. The communism of the SFRY was considered a milder version than that of the Soviet Union (Tito split with Joseph Stalin in 1948), and the country was often portrayed as a bridge between the East and the West.

Svetlana, the future peace activist, was born to two young medical doctors who served in the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA). Reinforcing the concept of Brotherhood and Unity, Tito sent JNA officers away from their hometowns to other republics and provinces within Yugoslavia. For example, "With their families, Belgrade guys were sent to Tetovo in Macedonia. Sarajevo boys were sent to Slovenia. Slovenian boys were sent to Vojvodina or Niš [Serbia]." Just months after Svetlana's birth, she and her parents were sent to Novi Sad, north of Belgrade, in the province of Vojvodina. On the banks of the Danube River and in the shadows of Petrovaradin Fortress, Svetlana would learn both the privileges and the disadvantages of living under Tito.

Vojvodina lies in the Pannonian plain of central and eastern Europe, all "fields of wheat in a big green valley." Compared to its closest southern neighbor city, Belgrade, Novi Sad was "much slower. Everything was slow-paced, everyone tolerant. It was famous because of its peaceful orientation among its people." The province borders Hungary to the north and Austro-Hungarian influence is evident in the region. Though primarily composed of Serbs, there are several prominent minority groups, including Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, Croats, and Roma. Svetlana recalls the openness and what she can now understand as the progressiveness of her preschool and kindergarten in Novi Sad. "They had all these fantastic programs. They didn't just feed us, but they did games, arts, gym, everything. I think that somehow those early influences framed some kind of path for me, influenced me how to work with kids."

Along with experiencing the diversity of peoples in Vojvodina, during her childhood Svetlana also traveled often to Slovenia, another republic of the SFRY. From the ages of four to six she would go on organized trips there with her schoolmates. Later in her childhood, she would travel to the republic to visit her uncle, who lived there with his wife and family. Sandwiched between Italy, Austria, Hungary, and Croatia in northwest SFRY, the mountainous landscape of Slovenia was a drastic change from the fertile plains of Vojvodina. In Kranjska Gora in the Julian Alps, Svetlana learned to ski and sled, and in the ice rink and frozen lakes of Jesenice she skated almost every day of her winter trips. Her uncle bought her first pair of ice skates to match the sweater and hat her mother knitted. "He bought me one size too big, so I still have these skates. These are my first and only skates I've ever had."

Though she is too young to remember the incident, Svetlana later learned the story that would remind her that life under Tito was not as harmonious as what her childhood in Novi Sad provided, or what Tito's seemingly pacific Brotherhood and Unity idea concealed. In 1965, her

father told a joke at work about Tito, insinuating the "father of Yugoslavia" had a mistress. A simple bout of good humor became a nearly year-long sentence in a prison in Kragujevac, in central Serbia. Her mother would later recall the strenuous days traveling back and forth to visit him, but despite this, Svetlana's parents remained in the army and would continue to progress through the ranks. But they nevertheless marked the event: the day he was released from prison, Svetlana's baby brother was born. They named him Slobodan, meaning "freedom."

Croatian Seasons

Automobiles with Serbian license plates were thrown into the Adriatic Sea near Split, Croatia. Shop signs and traffic signs written in Cyrillic[4] were torn down and destroyed. The teacher called her *Svjetlana*, rather than Svetlana. She can't remember the names or faces of her classmates, only the echo of their voices mocking her Serbian accent: *lepo belo mleko*.[5]

It was to this anti-Serb climate that the Trajković family was told by the JNA to move in 1972. The nationalist movement known as *Maspok* (short for *masovni pokret*, "mass movement"), or the Croatian Spring, began as an intellectual movement primarily among linguists who wanted Croatian recognized as a separate language from Serbian. By the early 1970s, it had become an anti-Serb, nationalist, and militant movement among several prominent Croat politicians and some in the general public. At the end of 1971, Tito suppressed the movement and purged many of the nationalists from the government, imprisoning many of them—including Franjo Tuđman, the future president of Croatia during the wars of the early 1990s—but remnants of the nationalist movement were still evident in the general public.

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[4] Serbo-Croatian was one of the three official languages of the SFRY and was spoken primarily in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro. In Croatia, the language is written in the Latin alphabet and the primary dialect is known as *ijekavica*. In Serbia, the Cyrillic alphabet is used and the dialect is referred to as *ekavica*.
[5] The words are translated "beautiful white milk." In the Croatian dialect, this would be pronounced *lijepo bijelo mlijeko*.

Nine-year old Svetlana was entering the third grade of primary school in Split, along the Dalmatian coast, but her mother had a difficult time getting her into school in the nationalistic environment. “I remember her comments about how painful it was, how humiliating. She was so angry that we as kids had to pass through all of this just because of the fact that we came from Serbia.” But primary school was obligatory, so the school was forced to accept Svetlana, though she remembers little from that first year. “I erased that year from my memory. I remember all my classmates from the fourth, fifth, sixth grades, but I do not remember anybody from the third. It’s just a loss in my memory.” Her teacher refused to call her according to the Serbian *Svetlana*, so the young girl began using the common shortened version of her name, Ceca. Despite the incessant teasing of her schoolmates, she learned the local dialect and the Latin alphabet with ease. After the family was given a permanent flat from the JNA and Ceca changed schools, she progressed quickly in her studies, engaging in music, choir, and painting. She began keeping a diary and wrote it in Latin rather than Cyrillic: “I even started thinking in ijekavica. It was my internal language.” Her parents continued to speak ekavica at home, but Ceca moved flawlessly between the two dialects.

As the president of her pioneer organization at the age of twelve, and dressed in her navy blue knee-length skirt, a white button-up shirt, red scarf, and blue hat with a red star, Ceca made a fist with her right hand, placing it backwards against the side of her forehead: the partisan salute.[6] She called out, “Dear colleagues, you will now become a pioneer. *Za domovinu s Titom!* (‘For our homeland with Tito!’).” Her “comrade” on stage then saluted her and began the procession with “*Naprijed!*” (‘Go ahead!’ or ‘Onward!’). Each first grader at Ceca’s school came on stage, affirmed “*Za domovinu s Titom!*” and then received their pioneer scarves and hats,

[6] Tito was a partisan, the main Yugoslav resistance movement during World War II against the Nazis. Partisans also fought the Ustaše (Croatian fascists allied with Germany) and the Četniks, Serbian nationalists.

along with a booklet containing the ethics code for pioneers. After all had received their new uniforms, Ceca recited the pioneer oath, inviting the seven-year-olds to repeat it after her:

> *Danas, kad postajem pionir,*
> *Dajem časnu pionirsku reč*
> *Da ću marljivo učiti i raditi,*
> *Poštovati roditelje i starije,*
> *I biti veran, dobar drug koji drži datu reč,*
> *Da ću voleti svoju domovinu, Socijalističku Federativnu Republiku Jugoslaviju*
> *I sve njene narode i narodnosti.*
>
> Today, as I become a pioneer,
> I give my honorable pioneer word
> That I will study and work diligently,
> Respect my parents and elders,
> And be a faithful, good friend who keeps his word,
> That I shall love my country, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
> And all her nations and nationalities.

This was the typical induction ceremony for Tito's pioneers every November 29, the Day of the Republic, across the SFRY.[7] Children automatically became pioneers in the first grade, and later, at age thirteen, became members of youth organizations—all on their way to becoming Communist Party members by adulthood. "It was like a little army. And I was such a uniform girl, a girl of JNA parents. When I was president of the pioneers, my mother made my armband. It was red and had these yellow bars on it for your rank." Pioneer uniforms were worn for all major Yugoslav holidays, including the Day of the Republic, May Day, Day of Youth, Soldier's/Fighter's Day, and Mother's Day/International Women's Day.

With her ability to adapt to and excel in new situations, the nationalist feelings left over from Maspok and the teasing of her classmates were all in the past for Ceca. Life in Split was "carefree" as she fell in love with "seaside living." When her parents were both called back to Belgrade by the JNA in order to study for their medical specialization, instead of uprooting the kids again, they asked Ceca's grandparents to move to Split and look after them. Her

[7] The Day of the Republic celebrated the founding of the country on November 29, 1945.

grandmother quickly became known as "Granny" to all of the neighborhood kids; she would make French toast and lemonade for them before they headed to the beach after school. While Ceca was catching seahorses and somersaulting through the warm Adriatic waters, Sloba, her brother, could be found on the boat fishing with his grandfather.

After her parents finished their specialization and were told they would remain in Belgrade, they moved the family back to the Serbian capital, interrupting the idyllic life in Croatia for fifteen-year-old Ceca. "The sea becomes such a part of you, your images in your head; you go to sleep with a view of the sea and then dream about it, the moonlight on the water and then the sun in the morning." But trips to Split were now reserved for holiday vacations. She went from knowing every single rock in the water at her beach, Trstenik, to "even fearing what was underwater because the rocks changed while I was gone. It wasn't mine anymore."

A Belgrade Tradition

In Split, Ceca had adjusted to the point where ijekavica was essentially her native tongue; in Belgrade, she stood out with her strange accent, her preference to write in the Latin alphabet, and her skin darkened and hair lightened by the sun. But as in Split, she again rose to the top of her class, becoming a top student and getting involved in many extracurricular activities. She kept her pioneer spirit and was actively engaged in Tito's youth organization:

> One of the things that I liked about moving to Belgrade was the opening of the possibility that I could maybe at some point be invited to participate in *Slet* [the celebration of Tito's birthday and the Day of Youth]. It was the same kind of feeling that people feel coming to Hollywood, that they will see actresses and actors on every corner. It was that sense of excitement.

Every year on May 25, the Day of Youth, Tito celebrated his birthday with all the young people of Yugoslavia. In the months leading up to Slet, a baton or *štafeta* was carried throughout the

whole of the SFRY by students, in the same way the Olympic torch is passed from runner to runner in the host country before the flame is lit during opening ceremonies. Rather than lighting a grand torch at the end of its journey, the baton is presented as a gift to Tito by the "best pupil" from a particular republic (the republic rotated from year to year). For schools outside of Serbia, there was little opportunity to participate in Slet each year, so every school across the SFRY held smaller celebrations and had their own miniature batons to relay around their towns. Ceca was chosen as a good pupil while in Split, and was able to run the baton when she was twelve years old. But the real privilege in 1979 would be to perform in the Belgrade Slet in Partizan Stadium.

Instead of synchronizing with her classmates as they marched for Tito, and instead of singing all the revolutionary songs she loved because of their vigor and energy, Ceca would have to hear the echo of *Uz Maršala Tita, Junačkoga sina nas neće ni pakao smest* [8] from the tunnel of the stadium. The previous December she had traveled to Zakopane, Poland with her class for the winter holiday. She had not skied in over eight years, and her eagerness to show her bravery, combined with poor equipment, did not help her as she lost control on the first run, on the first day, and broke her leg. "My skis went one way and my legs went another, with my feet still in my ski boots." By the time of Slet in May, she was still on crutches.

With and Without Tito

"Maybe something huge will happen and then I won't have to take my physics test tomorrow morning," Ceca daydreamed as she stared blankly in the direction of her mother, who was ironing her JNA uniform in front of the television. Though a diligent student of biology, Ceca hated physics.

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[8] The translation of this first line from a hymn to Tito entitled "With Marshall Tito," reads, "With Marshall Tito, heroic son, hell won't put us down."

It was 1980 and the Yugoslav population was aware Tito was ill, but no one knew how serious. Her parents had been told that if something drastic were to happen—such as his death—the entire army would be mobilized, including doctors, to prepare for possible conflict in the region. Not long after Ceca's bout of wishful thinking, her parents were called to the military base; that night the government announced the death of Tito. The former pioneer had been dreaming of school being cancelled because of something like an out-of-season snowstorm—not the death of the "father of their country." "I knew him since the day I was born. We were small kids and all our textbooks started with his picture. When you are little you learn 'mom,' 'dad,' and 'Tito.'"

Though her father had been imprisoned by Tito, the Trajkovićs had been living "as a normal, average family working for the JNA. If you were not disagreeing [with Tito and his policies], you could lead a normal life." Her parents had come from poor, disadvantaged families—her father was the first in his family to complete his university studies—and they owed their "normal, average" life to the educational opportunities the JNA provided.

> I know now that there were so many people, like dissidents and people disagreeing with the regime or with the partisans, who really suffered under Tito. But I didn't know that then. And my parents were working their own jobs, they were having their own lives and problems, so in that respect, nothing else was so relevant. They were not revolutionaries, they were doctors, and they knew what they were doing was human and altruistic.

Not only were Ceca's parents not dissidents, Ceca herself felt she "was living 'Brotherhood and Unity'" as she was raised. In an essay she was assigned in secondary school in Belgrade, she expounded on the "richness and diversity of Yugoslavia" she had already experienced: she had a Macedonian grandmother, a Bosnian Muslim grandfather, was born in Serbia, could count the flat plains of Vojvodina and the Croatian coast among her homes, and had frequented the rugged

mountains of Slovenia to visit her family. She reiterates, “I can’t deny what I experienced as a kid. That was my childhood and it was good and beautiful.”

Just as Ceca had joined the rest of the population of SFRY for years as they celebrated Tito and his birthday, she joined them in mourning his passing. No conflict occurred in the immediate aftermath of his death, “and then life got back to some kind of routine. Basically my life didn’t change that much.” Her parents continued working for the JNA and Ceca continued in school, following the socialistic ideals: she was told to “work hard and industriously and you will be given everything—a flat and a job from the state—when you finish university.” As the SFRY attempted to navigate its identity without Tito, Ceca embarked on her own path as well.

Education, Family, Uncertainty

Ceca returned to Belgrade just as an educational reform was occurring in the secondary schools there: all schools had essentially become vocational schools, and she had to choose between the social sciences or biological sciences. She opted for the latter and was on her way to becoming a laboratory technician in microbiology. Upon completing her final exams, she would have gone straight to the lab and eventually into medicine to become a doctor. However, she knew she was too people-oriented for an isolated laboratory, and wanted to carve her own journey to success, rather than follow in the footsteps of both her parents and join the medical field. She sought the advice of a school counselor just months before graduation. After much testing and talking, the counselor suggested psychology, a field that had always intrigued Ceca, but one she had never studied. Qualifying exams for entrance into the university were only one month away, so she threw herself into studying philosophy—the prerequisite for psychology at

the university—and general psychology. She passed easily and entered the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Belgrade in 1982.

She was quickly enveloped in university life. Although she had a steady boyfriend throughout much of her adolescence in Belgrade, their worlds drifted apart that first year of university. Apart from her studies, Ceca had an intimate group of friends she shared every moment with, including Slavica, her best friend. “I think in one year we probably spent every day, 365 days, together.” Slavica introduced her to a young man named Ivan, two years her junior, who also happened to be the brother of Slavica’s boyfriend, and they soon began dating. Ceca’s mother had previously opted to take another opportunity from the JNA to gain a further specialization, this time in Zagreb, Croatia. By the third year of her studies at the university, Ceca’s father retired from the JNA and she was given her parents’ permanent JNA flat in Belgrade, which quickly became an oasis for her and her friends.

It was here that they began questioning the communist party and the direction it was taking after the death of Tito. After the president’s death in 1980, there was collective ruling in the federation with a revolving presidency: with eight members of the collective presidency (one from each of the republics and two provinces), each year a president from a different area took office. Though she was still admittedly “politically naïve,” Ceca was disappointed with the lack of leadership after Tito, and the failing economy that made her dread the day she would graduate, knowing there were few opportunities for her after college. As an excellent student and member of the youth organization throughout secondary school, Ceca was offered membership in the communist party at the age of seventeen—an offer she could refuse only if she wanted to risk being labeled a traitor. She tried to remain active in the youth organization, but realized their mission was too closely tied to communist ideals she did not necessarily adhere to in a post-Tito

society; the government was proving itself hollow, corrupt, and power-hungry. Youth political schools, the means of propaganda by the communist party, were prevalent at the university, but she renounced her communist party membership, and together with her friends, developed alternative workshops to the youth political schools. These educational forums were intended to raise awareness among youth and spark political debate, rather than inculcate them with the communist status quo.

As she got closer to her graduation date, Ceca kept recalling the phrases she was raised to believe: "work hard and industriously and you will be given everything when you finish university," yet when she looked to her future, "everything" seemed a thin promise. Her options were limited in the failing economy in Yugoslavia, so like many women her age from the region, she decided to travel to the United Kingdom to work as an au pair, while also taking an intensive English language course. Ceca had been patient while waiting for a year for Ivan, whom she had been dating seriously for a couple of years, to fulfill his obligatory military service for the JNA on Korčula Island in Croatia; after her graduation from the university in 1987, it was now his turn to wait.

Her psychology degree was of tremendous benefit, as her first placement as an au pair was with a family of five kids, all suffering from or exhibiting symptoms of psychological disorders.

> I had just had clinical psychology my last year. The mother of the kids was locked in her room taking anti-depressants. I never saw her. The oldest girl would urinate during the night because of a disorder called enuresis. The second one was overly aggressive. The third one needed to be held all the time. The fourth one was nearly not speaking. And the baby would turn purple after he stopped breathing from crying all the time. Disaster. Disaster.

Within a month she had lost ten pounds. After the first month, she returned to Belgrade briefly to visit Ivan, and by the time she returned, she discovered she was pregnant. She still had a couple

of months left of her language study and au pair work, so she continued in the same neighborhood of southwest London, but requested a different placement. By early 1988, she was back in Belgrade with Ivan. They welcomed their son, Luka, to the world on July 21.

After the birth of Luka, Ceca continued to try to find permanent employment, but it was nearly impossible. She found temporary stints, including as a coordinator for an exchange program that sent Yugoslav students to the United States; for a brief time she even had a renewable contract with the JNA doing psychological testing for recruits. Again, the socialistic promise she had depended on, that if she worked hard and got through school she would always be provided for, was proving frail.

> For five years I was facing this reality: yes, socialism says that you will get your job immediately if you are a good pupil, you learn English, you have good marks—but nothing happened. I desperately wanted to be a psychologist in a school because I wanted to implement what I had learned in my studies, and I was so enthusiastic to work with youth, to do creative things—but nothing happened. I applied to more than 100 schools in the country and didn't get anything.

To keep herself busy and still engaged in work with youth, Ceca had joined Slavica and other friends in creating a traveling theater company called "Little Cloud." From a young age Ceca had participated in the arts in various forms: painting, doll making, drawing, crafts, sewing, playing the violin, singing in choir. The artistic aspects and creativity involved in performance had always been a powerful draw. In addition, the performances were for children, and were educational tools as well as entertainment. The idea began as a one-time performance for kids as part of a larger children's educational program at Belgrade's convention center, the Sava Center, but after the success of the program—and the fulfillment they all gained from it—they developed the idea of a traveling theater company, with Ceca as costume designer, writer, and actress.

In 1990, after months and months of Ivan teasing her because "the boys" were Kijevčanins and she was still a Trajković, Ceca relented, "OK, I want to be part of the tribe."

They were married on June 3, but it was not quite the romantic, elegant wedding she had planned, and to an outsider it might have been mistaken for a mafia event.

> In the spring in Serbia I get hay fever, every year. Between all the make up from my performances for Little Cloud and then touching all these dirty booklets at work [for the military recruitment center], I got these infections near my eyes. They were all swollen and it looked like someone had punched me. So I wore dark sunglasses on the day of my wedding, and so did Ivan, and the best man and my maid of honor. Even the civil servant from the town hall who was doing the wedding wore dark glasses. So in all my pictures we have these sunglasses on. We were like the Sicilian mafia.

Not long after the wedding, Ceca was pregnant again. They were living in the same apartment in New Belgrade that once had been an oasis for Ceca and her friends during college. “Our flat was a JNA flat because of my parents, and in a JNA building, full of people who were from Bosnia, Croatia, and elsewhere. We started feeling these tensions.” The JNA was dominated by Serbs, especially in the officer corps. Nationalist sentiments were growing in the republics and the Brotherhood and Unity concept which had held the country together was on shaky ground.

The political arena in Serbia was also unstable. Slobodan Milošević had come to dominate Serbian politics since a 1987 speech in Kosovo in which he rallied support from the Serb minority in the region. In December of 1990, in Serbia’s first multiparty elections, he defeated the divided opposition, including extreme nationalist Vojislav Šešelj, and Vuk Drašković, the founder of the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), to become president of Serbia.[9] A novelist who began advocating a Greater Serbia beyond the confines of its current borders, Drašković organized mass protests in March of 1991 against Milošević and his control of the media. The protests soon included most of the opposition parties to Milošević, but because of the nationalist strains of the SPO and more extreme groups, March 9 and 10 rapidly turned

[9] As distinguished from the president of Yugoslavia, which was still a rotating seat. In 1991, that office was also occupied by a Serb, Borisav Jović.

violent. Two people were killed, with hundreds injured and arrested. Ceca, however, over the river in New Belgrade, was more "focused on my small nucleus in a way: our life, our family, our conditions, because it was since 1987 that I hadn't had a permanent job. I was not yet aware of the political situation." And, of course, she was pregnant. Just one month after the violent protests, and only two months before breakaway Yugoslav republics and Milosevic's aggression started destroying the notion of Brotherhood and Unity, Ceca's and Ivan's calm and content daughter, Dina, was born into a world of chaos.

Flood of Awakening

"'Serbia is not officially involved in any war.' That was the sentence that state television was telling the audience all the time." Yet, her brother had left Serbia in 1991 to avoid the military draft, as had hundreds, perhaps thousands, like him. Ivan had concealed his real address to avoid the JNA knocking on his door. And the greatest evidence that Serbia was indeed at war: the refugees flooding Belgrade in 1991 and 1992.

The growing nationalism in Serbia and Croatia, along with the clear dissolution of the League of Communists at its Fourteenth Congress in 1990 and the lack of any meaningful political actions to hold the republics together were factors that led Croatia to declare its independence from Yugoslavia in late June 1991. Slovenia declared its independence the same day—but the conflict there lasted only ten days, ending in the Brioni Accord and Slovenia's independence from Yugoslavia.[10] But resentment had been brewing between both Croatia and Serbia as republics, and more disruptively, within Croatia itself. The republic had a large Serb

[10] The agreement was signed on the Brioni Islands in the Adriatic Sea. The brief war in Slovenia was characteristically different than the war which followed in Croatia, and resulted in few casualties. See Laura Silber and Alan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation* (New York: Penguin, 1996), and Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War* (New York: Penguin, 1992).

population, and ethnic animosities—stirred by both the Serb and Croat governments—were prevalent in the Krajina region (northeast of Split) and Slavonia (in northeastern Croatia, along the border with Serbia). Heavy fighting broke out, particularly in the cities of Vukovar and Dubrovnik, among a newly formed Croat army and the JNA, backed by local Serb military groups. Vukovar was under siege for more than three months and eventually fell to the Serbs. The town was completely destroyed. By year's end, Serb forces held one-third of the territory in Croatia. A United Nations-sponsored ceasefire, negotiated primarily by the American diplomat Cyrus Vance, went into effect in January of 1992, with the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) monitoring the ceasefire and guarding demilitarized "safe havens" in the regions of Krajina, Eastern Slavonia, and Western Slavonia before many of the peacekeepers had to move on to Bosnia-Herzegovina later that year.

Bosnia-Herzegovina,[11] the Yugoslav republic with the most broad and even ethnic representation (43 percent Bosnian Muslim, 35 percent Orthodox Serb, 18 percent Roman Catholic Croat, and several other minorities),[12] held a referendum on independence in March of 1992. The Bosnian Serbs boycotted the vote, resulting in a 99 percent vote for independence; in response, the Bosnian Serbs declared their own Serb republic within the borders of Bosnia. Milošević and the regime in Serbia[13] backed the Bosnian Serbs, both politically and militarily, as the JNA joined forces with the local Bosnian Serb army and paramilitaries. When the Muslim- and Croat-occupied Bosnia declared its independence, the international community diplomatically recognized the new nation, but a 1991 United Nations arms embargo on the region remained in place; thus, the Muslims and Croats were at a significant military

[11] In keeping with the majority of literature on the Yugoslav wars, the republic will be referred to simply as Bosnia.
[12] Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).
[13] As the breakup of the SFRY continued, the republics of Serbia and Montenegro formed the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in April of 1992. Throughout the story, the FRY will be referred to simply as Serbia, though the republic would not become an independent nation until 2006.

disadvantage against the JNA-backed Bosnian Serbs. The Serbs quickly took control of over half the republic and began their attacks on Sarajevo in April, the beginning of a four-year siege of the city.

The violence in both of the republics resulted in thousands of people displaced, both internally and across borders as refugees. Though the numbers of Croats and Bosnian Muslims displaced was markedly higher in the region at this time, ethnic Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia also fled from revenge attacks.[14] Many sought refuge in Belgrade.

The beginning of war in the former Yugoslavia coincided with Ceca's first permanent job offer. She was invited by Tinde Kovač-Cerović, an educational psychologist at the University of Belgrade, to join the faculty as a researcher. Not yet fully aware of the events taking place in Croatia or Bosnia, the move to the university began her transition from the private to the public sphere, and widened her understanding of the war. Ceca helped teach classes and conduct research with the professors she was working for, but Professor Kovač-Cerović soon received an invitation from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to gather educational psychologists to work with refugee youth in collective centers for refugees in Belgrade.

The government had no official policy for refugees; they were treated as a temporary phenomenon and housed in places such as former pioneer youth centers, which were "like summer camps" or almost "military bases": little rooms with metal beds, sometimes fifteen people to one room. Food and supplies were handed out by humanitarian organizations, but "there was never enough." Beyond their physical needs, the refugees had obvious emotional and

[14] Serb refugees were not as numerous in Belgrade until 1995, when two Croatian military offensives, Operation Flash and Operation Storm, expelled roughly 200,000 Serbs from the regions previously under UN protection. Thousands upon thousands of Serb refugees arrived in Belgrade. Ceca was even more involved in the refugee situation at that time, providing humanitarian aid and working closely with a group of people who would eventually form the NGO, Group 484.

psychological needs, most escaping conflict and forced to abandon the only homes they had ever known.

> So many people in Belgrade were just sitting and watching the news, viewing that there were refugees coming, but did nothing. We did not want to be part of the silent majority. We said it was really our responsibility, our duty as psychologists, as women, as human beings, to do something. Maybe there were potential different answers or responses to the situation. The response that was not acceptable for me was to stay passive and do nothing. So, personally, I needed to do something, and I belonged to this group of people, so that was easier for me to make this kind of decision. We supported each other and started thinking of what we could do.

They began working with the younger children, seven- to ten-year-olds (and then up to fourteen-year-olds), and rather than dealing directly with psychological issues the youth may have had because of the transition, they took a holistic approach.

> We were educational psychologists and we wanted to offer something that was creative, engaging, not necessarily dealing with trauma or their feelings of loss, but just dealing with the actual, the present. We assessed their needs and then tried to provide structure and offer them some constructive content. There is a tendency in these situations to treat them as if something is wrong: they have suffered trauma and so they must be sick. Of course, if there was something deeper, it would surface and we had ways of handling that. But they were just displaced and we didn't want to treat them as if something was wrong with them.

The team would spend up to three hours with the kids in the afternoons, offering games and activities, and providing a respite for weary parents, themselves dealing with displacement and still trying to take care of their children. The games and activities were focused on self-expression and peer and group interaction. Their objective was "to help the children gain a feeling of competence" and to provide an "experience which is authentic, conscious, adopted, enriched through exchange and added to, [becoming] a new phenomenon that is processed into cognition."[15] The group's work was highly regarded by UNHCR and was developed into an

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[15] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Cognition through Games: A Handbook for Workshops for Children, 7 to 14 years old," http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b84c4fa9.pdf.

educational manual entitled *Cognition through Games*,[16] which enumerated and detailed the workshop activities for youth. Printed in 1993, it received the *Žiža Vasić*, the Serbian Psychological Society's award for popularization of psychology in 1994.

The Bridge

"First, we had this experience working with refugees and we got some useful tools, and really, my head was open, my eyes were open." A new career, a young family, and a country disintegrating before her—Ceca was seeking out ways "to make change, to find meaning, to believe in people." While working with the refugee youth in Belgrade, she was invited to a training organized by Vesna Pešić, the then director of the CAA. Though she was now being sensitized to the conflicts raging in the former Yugoslavia, she had no formal education in peace studies or training in conflict resolution.

The workshop was held on the premises of CAA in the center of Belgrade; around thirty people attended, including Pešić herself. It was led by a pair of trainers from the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR), one of which was the president of the organization, Diana Francis. It was a "marathon training," six full days of the "basics": active listening skills, mediation techniques, theories of nonviolent conflict resolution. The idea that there could be a win-win solution, that both sides to a conflict could be satisfied, was "such an unknown concept," as was the notion that conflict could be constructive.

> One of the first insights which was difficult to accept was that conflict was happening all over the place, and we were only just becoming aware of the full extent of ours. It all seems so basic now, but we were so eager. We were so impressed and I was so fascinated.

[16] The Serbian title is also translated "Learning through Play."

Francis used many games, group activities, and role plays to demonstrate the theories she was teaching, and Ceca was particularly moved by the applicability and usefulness of what she was learning. In the game "Magic Gift," the participants would take an everyday object and transform it so that it would take on a quality other than its typical nature or function. When the training was nearly over and Francis was preparing to leave, she encouraged them, "You had this training, but you are the one who will decide what to do with it. We are here to give you this gift, but you are the one who can open it, close it, leave it on the shelf—or you can do something with it. It's your turn now."

Ceca and her fellow psychologists who had attended the workshop turned their gift into an established organization. In the weeks following what Ceca now terms the "miracle seminar" by her "peace guru," Francis, the psychologists invited more of their colleagues to be informed and trained on the concepts they had just learned. Soon, they "built the nucleus" for Group MOST, the Association of Cooperation and Mediation, under the auspices of the CAA.[17] Though grateful to operate as part of the first NGO in Serbia, the group needed to define itself apart from the organization.

> People from the Center did demonstrations and antiwar activities, so it was perceived not as *non*governmental, but *anti*-governmental. We wanted to promote the same ideas—we were antiwar—but what were we for? We wanted to give a concrete, constructive answer to that. We wanted to express the idea of connecting people and communicating. Mediation was such a new concept, so we wanted that in the title. And *most*, meaning 'bridge,' seemed symbolic.

MOST is still in operation today, and Ceca still an associate and engaged in various activities. Many of the projects she has coordinated or participated in over the years of her activism have

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[17] *Most* means "bridge" in Serbo-Croatian. The group was first registered as an organization in 1993. MOST/CAA were nominated for the UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization] Peace Prize in 1996. The association became independent of the CAA in 2000.

been internationally-funded MOST projects, including the work that has "engaged [her] fully": Goodwill Classroom.

Classrooms of Goodwill

"The school system and academic setting in Serbia have always been rigid, so inflexible. The professors speak ex cathedra and are only focused on the reproduction of knowledge. It's difficult to change; it's a bureaucratic machinery, like a big, slow elephant." Ceca began her work at the university officially as a researcher, but was soon giving lectures and conducting classes. She was in many ways an assistant to her supervising professor: Kovač-Cerović was teaching the theory of educational psychology to third-year students, while Ceca was responsible for practical application, often designing real-life problem situations that the students might encounter in schools, or screening professional educational psychologists to give presentations in the classroom. Ceca enjoyed teaching and quickly became a mentor to many of her students. Within days of the start of the year, she was calling each of them by their first names, which was "not so common in our Serbian academic surroundings."

> Most professors try to keep this distance, some kind of veneer, with their students, addressing them in a distant but courteous manner. But I broke the rules—I wanted connection. I wanted to demystify the concept of hierarchy. I called them by their first names and I let them call me by my first name.

Between her work at the refugee collective centers and teaching educational psychology at the university, and despite the rigid academic surroundings, "there was an expansion in me. I started to see so many creative ways this work [at the collective centers] could be applicable in schools." Beginning in 1995, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) awarded a grant for a MOST project entitled "Goodwill Classroom" (GWC). The educational psychologists in

MOST brought much of their success from interactive and experiential learning with refugee youth to their new project.

With international sanctions imposed on Serbia because of the war in Bosnia, the situation on the ground for civilians was strenuous. Ceca acknowledges that children in Serbia were not as affected by war like the children in Bosnia or Croatia, but they were indeed affected in other ways. Youth were exposed to hyper-masculine rhetoric that fueled Milošević's propaganda machines and the war. Furthermore, living in a closed country and suffering under hyperinflation, parents were consumed by trying to earn enough money to feed their children. Teachers naturally also suffered, and many became apathetic because of poverty and conflict. Ceca and her colleagues went about creating a program which would give children the means to handle conflict constructively and help them learn to be self-confident. According to the GWC manual,

> The common framework of the GWC peace education subprograms is characterised [sic] by two fundamental aspects: first, work on the individual self and, above all, an effort to understand individual needs and to encourage self-esteem, self-confidence, and personal accountability. [sic] Second, work on developing constructive, understanding, assertive relationships with others, in the sense of appreciating individual and group differences as well as social responsibility.[18]

In the first two years of the project, the team implemented the workshops within schools, working primarily with the students themselves. After the initial implementation, the MOST members began educating and training teachers on the methodology, trained the trainers of teachers, and in another phase, incorporated GWC into the university setting by having undergraduate students implement the program as part of their practicum work. "It was the first

[18] Center for the Study of Balkan Societies and Culture, "Southeast European Educational Initiatives and Cooperations for Peace, Mutual Understanding, Tolerance, and Democracy," http://www-gewi.uni-graz.at/csbsc/documentary_report/GWC.htm. The document is a report on the project. In the published manual, Ceca contributed primarily to the section devoted to children between the ages of twelve and fourteen.

concrete implementation of our ideas and all these skills that we had wanted to implement in schools as a practical tool and basically make some positive change."

The seminars and methodology even became "streams of hope" and "oases of nurturing" amidst the desert of apathy for many of the teachers. "Teachers would come to the trainings thinking it would just enrich their regular work, but then immediately they would realize it was applicable to their own lives as well, these ideas about communication and being assertive."

Ceca was involved in almost all steps of the project: creating the workshops, implementing them in classrooms, training teachers and trainers, and supervising the trainings. "This work composed all the elements of what I love: creation, writing, friendships, experiential learning, work with youth, work with teachers, promoting what I really believe in." For the launch of the GWC manual in 1995, Ceca sewed a large tapestry of the image from the cover of the manual: an imposing yet gentle oak tree with yellow birds in its limbs. She was "completely emotionally involved" in the project, and claims that at a time when much of her generation was leaving Serbia because of the war and destroyed economy, the creation and implementation of the program "was actually the thing that kept me in Serbia. Belonging to a group that thinks as you think and then producing something together—this is valuable." Goodwill Classroom is still in use throughout Serbia today, creating "classrooms of goodwill across the country," and slowly changing the seemingly inflexible educational system.

Through the Bars

With inflation so high it bordered on absurdity, no milk, no fuel, no public transportation in the city, it was difficult for Ceca to think of anything beyond her confines of Belgrade. But the training with Diana Francis, along with the knowledge of her brother, Sloba, and others like him

living abroad, led Ceca to consider what life was like in England. “I simply wanted to prove to myself that things were possible in these impossible situations, despite all these life circumstances.” It was 1993 and she and her colleagues had just been compensated by UNHCR for *Cognition Through Games*. “I can’t remember the exact figures now, but it was like a total of $2,400, so $400 per person, paid in dinars.” Inflation was seemingly out of control, so black market currency dealers could be found on every corner out in the open. Ceca took the $2,400 worth of dinars, which would only fit in a large duffle bag, down to the street to exchange it for deutschemarks, the preferred currency in those desperate times. Ivan sent his blessing and a warning, “God protect you. Somebody will kill you for that money.” It was a wealthy sum for any Serb at the time, but “I was losing with every second.” By nightfall, she had lost nearly $500 because of the rate of inflation. She divided the money among her co-workers and then purchased a ticket to London.

After her pleasant and poignant encounter with Žarko, the Croatian man on her flight to Amsterdam, Ceca arrived in London. Rattled by the number of choices she was faced with when she needed a toothbrush, she let Sloba select one for her. “He was asking me if I wanted soft or hard, Colgate or Oral-B, and I said, ‘Come on.’ In Serbia it wasn’t which kind you wanted, but whether you could buy it at all.”

She cherished her time with Neil and Ewa, her friends from her au pair days, and with Diana, who was delighted to learn of the founding of MOST, but it was the time with her brother that showed her how the conflict in Yugoslavia rippled beyond its borders and took varying dimensions. Sloba had many friends who also emigrated, but not just Serbs. “I met Macedonians, Croats, Bosnians. It was like a small Yugoslavia.” Sloba even had a girlfriend from Split. “It was such a paradox: here were people from all over Yugoslavia getting along while their parents and

relatives are killing each other back home." But, back in Serbia, she was aware of the negativity directed toward those who had emigrated. Serbs at home believed the emigrants had escaped the suffering and treated them almost as traitors. Ceca, however, observed a similarly horrible situation in London: those who had left Yugoslavia were either illegally in the country and could not find work, or were asylum seekers whose status was uncertain, all contributing to unemployment, desperation, depression, and drug use. "Yes, they weren't in our cage in Serbia, but they were in some other cage."

Ceca returned from London with the recognition that she was part of a wider world than Serbia, but also with the knowledge that the ramifications of violent conflict extend into that broader community as well.

Flavors of Peace and Conflict

She decided to go for a brief walk in the old section of Sarajevo, all the while singing a melancholy tune she knew from childhood, a love song that references a famous location in the city:

Kad ja podjoh na Bentbašu,
Na Bentbašu na vodu,
Ja povedoh bijelo janje,
Bijelo janje se sobom.

When I went to Bentbašu,
Bentbašu by the riverside,
I brought a white lamb,
A little white lamb with me.

Strolling along the Miljacka River which runs through the city, Ceca let the sad song wash over the images before her of bullet-holed buildings and shattered windows. She tried not to think of the Serb snipers who, from 1992 to 1995, kept their sights set on Sarajevo residents from the

mountains ringing the city. She passed Vijećnica, the old town hall which formerly housed the National Library. Before the war it was a glorious Moorish-revival structure from the days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. On that day in 1997, it was only walls, a facade, ruins. As part of their genocidal objectives, the Bosnian Serb army had specifically targeted the library, a symbol of cultural heritage with its one million books. Etched on a marble stone on one of the remaining walls was a remembrance: “Serbian enemies destroyed this building. Never forgive. Never forget.”

It was her first time back in the city since the Dayton Peace Accords had been signed in 1995 and the war ended, at least on paper.[19] Postwar Sarajevo was almost entirely Bosnian Muslim when Ceca and her colleague at the university and at MOST, Dragan Popodić, were invited as peace activists to an international conference on peacebuilding and conflict resolution, organized by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) in Bosnia. The conference was also sponsored by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), which brought politicians and policymakers from the region to join NGO and peace activists to discuss sustainable peace and reconciliation in postwar Bosnia.

During a break on the first day of the two-day conference, Ceca wandered down Obala Kulina Bana, the street along the Miljacka, window shopping and occasionally venturing into open stores. In one, she saw a type of chocolate called Bajadera, made by a Croatian company,

[19] The Accords were negotiated over the month of November and signed on December 14, 1995 in Dayton, Ohio, in the United States. The agreement had essentially left two ethnically pure territories under one central government in Bosnia. The Croats, 17 percent of the population after the war, and the Bosnian Muslims, 44 percent of the population and the largest ethnic group, were each allocated 25 percent of the land, joined in the Bosnian-Croat Federation. The Bosnian Serbs, 31 percent of the population, were accorded 49 percent of the land in what was known as Republika Srpska. The movement of ethnic populations—in those cities that had not already been “ethnically cleansed”—took place so that, for example, a Muslim-populated enclave would not exist in Republika Srpska. Thus, cities like Prijedor, which had a majority Muslim population before the war, was now primarily Serb. Sanski Most, a multiethnic town on the Sana River, was now largely Muslim. Pale, a resort town just outside Sarajevo and frequented by all ethnicities from the city before the war, was now Serb-dominated in Republika Srpska.

that she loved and hadn't tasted for several years, since before the wars. She inadvertently let out, "Oh, I love that chocolate!"

The shopkeeper heard her accent and shouted, "You Serbian bastard! How dare you come in here!" To this woman who had suffered through a three-year siege of her beautiful, multiethnic town, she could only see Ceca as a Serb, allied with the war criminals who had destroyed Vijećnica and the rest of the city with it.

And Ceca, who had loved the city even as a child when the family would stop there on their way from Belgrade to the sea, could only keep saying, "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry about what happened to Sarajevo"—this peace activist now viewed as responsible for the actions of her countrymen.

Ceca left the shop still apologizing, and angry at herself for uttering a word in the shop. She tried to clear her head, and decided to snack on *ćevapi*, a minced meat dish prepared especially succulent in Sarajevo. Like the chocolate, she had been missing these unique flavors for many years. She found the best ćevapi around and sat down on a park bench. As she took her first bite, a man passing by on crutches, obviously a war veteran and apparently homeless, eyed her for a moment and then commented, "Oh, so you're a *Četnik*[20] then? How are my brother Četniks doing?"

Her bite of ćevapi stuck in her throat as she struggled to figure out how he knew she was from Serbia. She realized she had left her nametag from the conference on her blouse—her surname gave her away as a Serb. The man inched closer and closer to her, throwing out insults about Serbs. They were completely alone in the middle of the park.

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[20]Četniks were a Serbian nationalist group that initially formed to fight the Nazis, but later fought a civil war against Tito and the Partisans. During the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, Vojislav Šešelj, the extreme nationalist and monarchist leader of the Serbian Radical Party, called himself the leader of the Četniks in Serbia. The term was often applied in a derogatory manner to Serbs by non-Serbs.

“Sir, I understand,” she began to speak, slowly and trying to show some kind of empathy to the man. “Maybe there are Četniks, but I don’t know them. I am not one of them. Yes, my name is Svetlana Kijevčanin and I come from Belgrade, but I am a peace activist.”

He waved his hand, dismissing her remarks and ordered her to follow him. Though on crutches, the man was aggressive and frightening to Ceca, who had only minutes before been verbally attacked by the shopkeeper. She took a step in his direction. He stopped, sensing perhaps that she was not a threat and that she did not care to trade insults with him. “Fine, you don’t have to go with me, but just give me some money,” he commanded, trying to keep up the menacing pretense. She emptied her pockets, turned, and left the park as quickly as she could.

Ceca cannot remember the rest of the conference, whether it was productive or fruitless, what was said, who was there, what it hoped to achieve other than its lofty goal of “sustainable peace and reconciliation.” The Dayton Accords promised peace, and while Sarajevo was no longer physically under siege, many Sarajevo residents could not help feeling besieged, imagining and fearing the violent hatred they thought every Serb harbored.

Even in 2006, the divide was still mirrored in transportation within the former Yugoslavia. There were no buses that went directly from Belgrade to Sarajevo proper in the Bosnian-Croat Federation. When Ceca travels there, she must take a bus to Eastern Sarajevo in Republika Srpska, cross the street, and then take the next tram five minutes into Sarajevo proper.

Joy of Europe

The peace agreement at Dayton managed to stop the killing in Bosnia, but it did nothing about Milošević’s grip on power in Serbia. His strategy of ethnic cleansing in the war in Bosnia was not of concern to the Dayton negotiators, and so the Serbian president turned his genocidal

gaze to Kosovo, a province long claimed by Serbia for its historical and religious import. In 1389, the Serbs were defeated by the Ottoman Turks at Kosovo Polje, when, according to legend, the Serb leader and prince chose a heavenly kingdom over an earthly one, and thus forfeited the battle. In 1987, on the anniversary of the battle, Milošević proclaimed to Serb nationalists in the province, "No one should dare to beat you!"[21] Kosovo Albanians made up roughly 90 percent of the population, and the minority Serbs felt persecuted. Two years after his proclamation to Serbs in the province, Milošević stripped Kosovo of its political autonomy (like Vojvodina, Kosovo had the status of an autonomous province according to Tito's 1974 Yugoslav constitution), curtailing the rights of Albanians and then brutally repressing the majority population when they tried to claim those rights.

After largely nonviolent attempts to regain their rights, a Kosovo Albanian guerilla group called the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) formed to fight their way to independence from Serbia. In early 1998, the KLA killed several Serb policemen, sparking a brutal cycle of conflict that continued throughout the year. Little of the violence was reported to the general Serb population, however. Serbian state-run media never strayed from the propaganda generated by Milošević, and independent media sources, including the progressive daily newspaper *DANAS* and B92 independent media, were heavily censored. As the state-run media had kept the Serbian public from understanding the full extent of the conflicts both in Croatia and Bosnia, so did they largely conceal this war.

While the Yugoslav army and the KLA continued battling each other, and as signs of atrocities against ethnic Albanian citizens were reported in international media—though not by Serbian media—life generally proceeded as usual for citizens in distant Belgrade. However, there was a renewal in the making in the fall of 1998: an international celebration of children

[21] Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Yugoslavia: Death of a Nation*.

called Joy of Europe was taking place in the capital. Ceca remembered it from her childhood, when kids from all over Europe descended on the city to be hosted by Belgrade families and to display and celebrate their continent's cultural diversity. The event had not occurred for almost ten years, but was revived by the city of Belgrade; it seemed a sign of normalization in the country if children from abroad were allowed into Serbia. The children arrived just as the United Nations condemned Serbia for their actions in Kosovo, and as negotiations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the West to end the war were beginning. In October of that year, Richard Holbrooke was trying to persuade Milošević to comply with UN resolutions and to allow observers into Kosovo.[22]

As Holbrooke was in and out of Belgrade, and as NATO countries granted the green light for military action against Serbia, hundreds of European children were being hosted for the week-long festival, the "pupil-to-pupil exchange." Luka's and Dina's school was responsible for hosting kids from Turkey. Ceca and Ivan welcomed three Turkish kids to join Luka, ten, and Dina, seven, along with the family's three new puppies at their home in the Dorćol area of Belgrade. "I thought there was no way that parents from Europe would let their kids come to Belgrade only to be bombed by NATO. No way. I think Milošević was thinking the same thing."

The five kids quickly became "brothers and sisters" despite the language difficulties—"it was pure pantomime." Ceca was still working at the university—now officially as a teacher's assistant, rather than a researcher—and had a flexible schedule. When the kids were not involved in official Joy of Europe events, Ceca took them to the zoo, on a tour of the city, and to plenty of shops for souvenirs. "I was so impressed with these kids. I took them to this souvenir shop and

[22] Holbrooke soon became the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. He was previously Assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian Affairs from 1994-1996 and the lead negotiator for the Americans at the Dayton peace talks to end the war in Bosnia.

this one little guy bought me something, and he bought Barbie dolls for his sister back home and one for Dina. He was so serious and said, ‘She is now my sister.’”

Apart from the cultural festivities in the Sava Center, Milošević, trying to soften his image, wanted to hold a reception for the children so he could be seen enjoying their performances and shaking hands with each of them. Ceca refused to let her children attend, fearing how they may be influenced by the dictator: “Dina was so small and right away she didn’t want to go. But Luka said, ‘I am going.’ And I said, ‘No way, you are not going to meet Milošević and put a stain on my biography!’”

Luka insisted on attending. Ceca compromised, telling him that if he could come up with a satisfactory argument on why he should go, she would let him. He thought for no more than a second and replied, “If I was living in Hitler’s period and the opportunity came up, I would go to see him. Now, I am living in Milošević’s period. This is my opportunity to meet this terrorist and I do not want to miss this opportunity.”

“Go,” she told him. Even Luka, at just ten years of age, was aware of the gravity of Milošević’s crimes.

Milošević met with all the children, taking full advantage of the photo opportunities, taking a Czechoslovakian kid’s hat and putting it on to pose with the child. Other than this blotch on the events program of the festivities,

> The Joy of Europe was such a beautiful experience. You have somebody else’s kids and you and your kids learn about their customs, you are trying your best to speak with them. Despite the language barrier, it’s such genuine communication—so beautiful.

The kids from all over Europe left Serbia after the festival, as Holbrooke continued shuttling between Belgrade, Washington, and NATO countries. The year 1998 came to an end with

continued stubbornness from Milošević, persisten violence in Kosovo, and more NATO threats—but no bombs on Belgrade.

Bombs on Belgrade

Ceca was sitting in front of the television the morning of March 24, 1999, just a few months after Joy of Europe. As she watched and listened to the news anchors and correspondents talking about NATO's bombing threats, she remembered the words of her friend Paul, an American journalist, who sat across from her at a cafe in the center of Belgrade just one week before: "Ceca, listen. They will bomb you. I don't know when, but it will happen. Believe me, they are serious." Paul left Serbia on March 19. The embassies were shut down and internationals warned to leave the city. Ceca just stared at the television and hung her head as she heard the breaking news—the reports as upsetting as the idea of bombs falling on the city: the night before, the chief editor of B92 independent media, Veran Matić, had been arrested and the offices of the station occupied by the Milošević regime.

Ceca had been collaborating on a project with B92 since the previous summer. She was developing a television series that would accompany a MOST manual on conflict resolution entitled, *The Wiser One Does Not Always Yield*, which she had co-authored with other MOST members. With financial support from the Fund for an Open Society, it was to air on B92.

There were six episodes for the series, each with the same structure: a narrator would first introduce the topic for the episode, a dramatic sequence would illustrate the topic, and finally, an expert would summarize and comment on the issue. It was largely a peace education project, with the following titles and issues:

1) “An Infernal Orange”: on the nature, causes, and possible outcomes of conflict situations
2) “The Dolphin’s Map”: on styles of behavior in conflict situations and ways of resolving them; also about the difference between a party’s positions and real needs in a conflict
3) “Some Other Person’s Moccasins”: on how people can have differing views on the same conflict situation; also about active listening and attempting to understand the “other” side
4) “Self-Confidence Desk”: on how to express interests and defend rights in a nonviolent and self-confident manner
5) “The Golden Bridge”: on the difference between debate and dialogue
6) “The Third Person”: on negotiation and mediation; also about the mediator’s role and how the role is not the same as a judge

It was an ambitious project from the beginning, with Ceca as leader, coordinator, organizer, author, director, editor, producer, and more. A technical director was assigned to the project, Ceca’s friend Goran Kovačić, who in the initial stages told her, “You are not realistic. This is too much. You are crazy.” The plan would require enlisting the support and cooperation of dozens of people, all essentially on a volunteer basis; they would need a significant amount of money to make it happen, which they did not possess; she wanted the series translated to English, Albanian, and Hungarian, so that it could be distributed beyond their Serbian confines—and all this during the unstable political and economic situation in the country, and the intensifying bombing threats from NATO. Ceca knew it was indeed ambitious, but she was intent on using the medium of television “to reach a much greater audience than you can with just a manual.” She just smiled at Goran and said, “You will see.”

They had only one camera to shoot all the angles of the sequences for the six episodes. Over forty people, including colleagues, friends, and students, appeared on screen for virtually no money. More than 200 people volunteered in one way or another. Ceca learned how to apply for permits and persuaded several public and private facilities to allow them to shoot footage, including at tram stations, the zoo, boutiques, shops, and even on street corners—they used a

total of thirteen set locations. And all the shooting was completed by October 1998, just as Joy of Europe was beginning. After the footage was captured, Ceca helped to edit the 1,200 hours of footage.

Ceca had devoted all of her spare time from the university to this project. She was still working as a teaching assistant and had begun research towards a master's degree, but this TV program became her "creative oasis" at a time of so much uncertainty, dread, and apathy in the country. Beyond the instability and frustration of the political scene, however, was a family tragedy. Her ten-year-old niece, Aleksandra, died in February 1999. She was playing in the bathtub and reached for a hair dryer, accidentally electrocuting herself. "Luka was the same age. You know, she was my kid, too, just as Luka and Dina were so present in their home. It was such a tragedy." Working at the university, protecting her own children from the soon-to-be violent political situation, and trying to console her brother- and sister-in-law[23] as they mourned the loss of their child, Ceca used the TV series as an outlet. "It helped me to survive the heaviness of reality."

The last day of serious post-production work finished on March 21. The final confirmation for the entire series was completed that day. "The only thing missing, literally, was my name, Svetlana Kijevčanin, because we couldn't decide on what my title should be: Author? Creator? Organizer? Coordinator?" It had been a long day, so the team decided to make the final decision two days later during their last scheduled slot at the B92 studios, a late shift from nine o'clock to midnight. They tried to unwind and celebrate that post-production was over: they viewed bloopers from the footage, and created spoofs using the theme songs from *Dallas* and

[23] They were Ivan's cousins, but Ivan and Ceca consider them as close as a brother and sister, and called Aleksandra their niece.

Dynasty, imagining how they would incorporate Blake Carrington, the main *Dynasty* character, into the film.

March 23 came, however, during the most intense threats yet that NATO would bomb the country. Ceca stayed in touched with Goran throughout the day and evening, when they finally decided to cancel the meeting at the studio. The threats were too severe, they had learned that U.S. President Bill Clinton had summoned Holbrooke out of Belgrade, and Ceca knew that if the sirens went off, all able-bodied men—including Ivan and Goran—could be mobilized for the army and forced to fight for Milošević. The members of the team opted to remain in their homes that night.

The following morning Ceca learned of Matić's arrest and the occupation of B92's studios. That night bombing began, but it was not until a few days later—while "it was so unpredictable" and "we were hearing sirens five times a day"—that she and her colleagues tried to enter B92 to retrieve their TV program. They were denied entry by the guard posted to the building. Though she followed the procedures for entering the now regime-occupied premises—reporting her presence and then filing reports concerning her work—she was not allowed into the studios to find her series. She tried several ways to ascertain what happened to the material, but it was most likely confiscated and destroyed when the building was stormed by the regime police. "I tried to accept reality. 'Come on,' I told myself, 'Your life is in danger, why are you worrying about a stupid television program?'" But she knew it was not a "stupid television program," but her "masterpiece," the culmination of her work to that point, combining her passions for youth, peace education, networking, and creative and original media.

> I lost my TV series, the evidence and product of all my efforts, hard work, enjoyment, creativity. It was never found. It was never broadcasted. I lost a part of my heart with it. It is still painful. I invested all my being, my passion, and my beliefs in this, and it never got out from the darkness.

Paradoxes and Sanctuaries

NATO began its campaign against Serbia on March 24, 1999, after the failure of peace talks at Rambouillet, France,[24] and after Milošević continued offensives in Kosovo. The general Serbian population was essentially kept uninformed about the situation in the southern province because of the propaganda spilling out from state-run media.

Despite the loss of her TV program, Ceca continued to work and carve out a semblance of normal life for her kids during the seventy-eight-day bombardment of Serbia. From the first day of bombing, she was determined to remain calm in order to keep Luka and Dina sheltered from the conflict as much as possible. The three had been walking home from Luka's drama class in Republic Square in the center of the city when they first heard the sirens signaling that NATO planes were approaching. "I remember that I didn't panic. I just took them under my arms on each side of me and said, 'OK, kids. We are going home. Let's walk quickly.'" They sheltered in the basement of their apartment building the first night, and though during the rest of the bombardment the kids stopped going to school and Ivan did not return to work until it was safe, Ceca continued at the university. "Only essential services were working, like the hospital, supermarkets. But in the university we had what are called 'working obligations,' so I needed to go every day to the university."

The previous year Ceca had redesigned a small, unused classroom at the university into a meeting place, a "student-friendly atmosphere," where she could hold her individual consultations with students, and where the students themselves could meet for workshops or forums around a specific topic. Using her own money, she bought carpet and curtains—yellow curtains so it appeared "the sun was coming in" at all hours. For seats, she sewed large pillows

[24] The peace talks at Rambouillet, outside Paris, France, were convened by the U.S. and the European Union. The West sought wide autonomy for Kosovo, the full withdrawal of Serb troops, and the allowance of armed peacekeepers into the province. Milošević refused the deal.

and used old-fashioned student chairs, and had Ivan put shelves on the walls while she decorated the rest with pictures and posters from local peace initiatives and campaigns. When the bombing began and students and teachers were still required to attend classes, this room became another oasis Ceca needed, and one she could provide her students.

> In this abnormal situation, you want to make things somehow normal, so students really wanted to be at school and read and take exams. It was such a paradox. The building it was in, the Faculty of Philosophy building, it was good in terms of architecture, but inside it had gray walls and gray floors. This room seemed totally different because it was human, it was colorful, it was nice—it had life in it now.

One group of students began meeting there everyday because "they wanted to do something meaningful" during the bombing. They began organizing to do work in shelters and to support the elderly, consulting with Ceca and seeking her advice on how to proceed as a group. "I encouraged them to get registered as an NGO, and I was giving them feedback all the time. They called me their honorary member." The group registered formally as an organization after the bombing, using a name that anticipated action and the "something meaningful" they intended: *Hajde da* . . ., or "Let's . . .." This group of psychology students who began meeting in the shelter and sanctuary of Ceca's room is now a developed and well-respected NGO in Belgrade, and have expanded their activities into youth programs and peace education.

As in all situations of armed conflict, there was a mass migration and reorganization of the population in the former Yugoslavia. Words like "refugee," "internally displaced," and "emigrant" were once again ubiquitous in the former Yugoslavia. Serbs from Serbia proper,[25] including intellectuals and the educated—and several of Ceca's colleagues from the university—emigrated to other countries. This group included those who were and had always been in opposition to Milošević's policies, like Ceca:

[25] "Serbia proper" excludes the provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo.

> The international community wanted to get rid of Milošević, and we wanted to get rid of Milošević. At that time, we [Milošević and all Serbs] were really put in the same cage. I could rationally understand why the international community was bombing us, but I never approved. My whole being was in opposition to Milošević and to NATO.

But Ceca and Ivan opted to remain in the city despite the dangers. In spite of all the frustration, anger, and desperation at the time both in the country and in their own minds, they were able to create a safe space for Luka and Dina.

> I do not regret that I stayed, though so many other people left. I do not blame them though. It was sensible for me to stay—I was working and that was how I structured my life. Being engaged in my work helped me to find what made sense in all these difficult times. And no matter how exhausting or demanding it was, my husband and I kept a small oasis for our kids. They were not exposed to these negative things despite the negative things that were happening there. They had food, they had toys, they had love. I am proud that, together with my husband, we created this nest for them in a period of uncertainty and instability.

More than those who emigrated from Serbia proper, people from Kosovo were intensely affected by Milošević's war in the province and by the NATO bombing. When the attacks began, the Serb military forced almost the entire Kosovo Albanian population out of Kosovo. Ivan, who had grown up in Priština and moved to Belgrade in 1981 because of unrest in the province, still had friends in the Kosovo capital. His Bosnian Muslim friend from his schooldays, Safet, had married an Albanian woman named Zulfija; the couple was still living in Priština while the conflict was raging, though Zulfija was actually raised in Belgrade and spoke only Serbian, no Albanian. When the NATO bombing started, they felt it was safer to be with friends in Belgrade than in the center of so much violence in the province. The couple stayed over a month in Ceca's and Ivan's flat:

> We were all under the same roof, like an extended family. It was such a paradox: Serbs were killing Albanians in Kosovo. But it was not such a paradox to have them living with us because these were our friends. We were just happy that we could help.

And by helping, established yet another oasis for herself, her family, and her friends.

Imagining a New Belgrade

NATO ended its bombing campaign on June 10 after Miloševič capitulated to a full military withdrawal from Kosovo. Ivan's parents immediately left for the cabin they owned on the mountain of Golija, and Ceca and Ivan decided to send the kids there for the rest of the summer, allowing the couple the time and space to recover from all that occurred in the previous year: the creation and then loss of her TV program, the death of Aleksandra, and of course, the bombs on Belgrade. Along with bicycle rides along Ada Ciganlija, an island in the Sava River, Ceca's work also continued to mend her. As the TV series and Goodwill Classroom had done, her work provided meaning and purpose to life in Belgrade. However, it was a challenge to heal and pursue a healthy lifestyle in the capital: Milošević was still in power; the economy was decimated by sanctions and isolation from the international community, and by the corruption and military spending of Milošević and his regime; and people were apathetic and had seemingly little energy to try to make change. "Just doing nothing, just witnessing the apathy, the poverty, the sorrow, the pain—I'm not that kind of person. I can't be passive. I'm proactive in my nature and my ideas." Ceca continued work at the university, but also became enthusiastic about a new project that promised to generate positive alternatives for herself and all the people of Belgrade.

Before the bombardment, in early 1999, Ceca had joined a group of creative thinkers and NGO activists who were learning about projects called "Imagine London" and "Imagine Chicago," in which citizens are prompted to imagine how their cities could be more vibrant or healthier. Some artists and activists who had worked for those projects had ties to Belgrade and wanted to implement it in the Serbian capital, but with its own Serbian flavor: "Imagine

Belgrade: How to Make Belgrade More My Own." However, by the end of the bombing, June of that year, the passion for the project was almost completely gone; only a few people from the original group managed to meet again. They invented the idea of the "Courtesy Zone," with its motto sentence about reviving courteous manners in the city: "Let us bring back into our vocabulary the simple but forgotten words, 'please,' 'thank you,' 'you are welcome,' and 'excuse me.'" Ceca, under the auspices of MOST, organized fifteen students from the Belgrade Open School and students from the Department of Theatre and Radio Production in the Faculty of Drama to implement the idea.

Courtesy Zone, as part of Imagine Belgrade, developed into a two-part campaign, the first a "Bus of Good Manners." On bus line No. 31, the Bus of Good Manners was plastered with large posters designed by an artist named Boris Marčetic and which incorporated the phrases the group wanted revived around the city. Marčetic had also developed stickers resembling the images used by the City of Belgrade Transportation Service, but which displayed the messages reflecting the idea of the project: "'You are welcome' is a 'thank you' for thank you." "'Excuse me'—we respect ourselves by respecting others." "'Please'—a sign of courtesy." "'Thank you' and a smile in return." These stickers were placed all over the interior of the bus, while the driver of the bus wore a T-shirt with the logo of the project. The Bus of Good Manners worked line No. 31 for a year.

The second part of the campaign involved marking off a pedestrian part of Knez Mihajlova, the main street in Belgrade, as the "Courtesy Zone," where the members of the group handed out Courtesy Zone postcards with more messages related to the intent of the project. Also, they would interview passersby to get their impressions of the zone and whether they felt it was effective. The entrances on each side of the zone were marked by two large "traffic signs"

indicating that walkers were entering the zone of courteous manners. Over 500 posters were printed and placed all over the area and distributed to stores and restaurants that line Knez Mihajlova for posting.

The group had their own jingle broadcasted on Radio B92 six times a day, as well as on other frequencies in the city.

> There was such good media coverage. Even the state media expressed their interest and asked us for an interview. My students were all over the radio stations. And I was amazed. We were such a small group of totally unknown people in the city of Belgrade, but this little idea made Belgrade an accessible village.

Though it was by all accounts a small project, and short—the zone lasted only from mid-February to mid-March of 2000—it showed clearly how small acts were essential to reviving the city. "The . . . idea was born of the need to bring back to the people what they have obviously lost—a little mutual respect which did not cost much, but the benefits of which were great, both for ourselves and for those around us."[26]

The project corresponded with another revival taking place among students and political opposition leaders in the country. That January, for Orthodox New Year's Eve, a group called *Otpor*,[27] or "resistance," organized a mass party in the center of the city. Otpor activists and opposition politicians spoke, rallying the crowd to take action against the regime by forcing early elections and voting against Milošević. Near midnight, the group screened a video that illustrated the misery and hopelessness of living under Milošević; the ending included the names of those killed in Milošević's wars. The opposition knew the time was ripe for change.

[26] Svetlana Kijevčanin, "Courtesy Zone," *Voice: Peace & Human Rights* 23 (March 2000). *Voice* was published by the Center for Antiwar Action

[27] Otpor was founded in 1998 by university students after the failure of protests in 1996 and 1997 to bring democratic reform to the country.

In addition to Imagine Belgrade, Ceca continued in the movement for change by developing and implementing trainings for the School for Democracy, a program organized by a local NGO, Civic Initiatives. As a member of MOST, she trained representatives of other NGOs, political parties, trade unions, media, local councils, Otpor, and other student organizations on minority-majority issues and on issues of power, as part of a larger program on civic participation and living in a democracy. She traveled all over Serbia, from Vrsac in Vojvodina to Vranje in the south, twelve towns in all, to deliver these trainings.

> It was so different in every region. Sometimes we talked about disabled people as minorities, sometimes about women's issues, always about discrimination and raising awareness. We were talking about power and how it influences social activism. We were strengthening people to be prepared for elections and to vote, to finally do something and be a democracy. The final message was how every single vote and every single person's presence was important.

Ceca gave these trainings from May through August, staying active as Milošević in early July tried to change the constitution in order to stay in power, as he later that month announced early elections, and as the opposition finally united at the beginning of September. Much of civil society on a localized level throughout the country was now schooled in democracy, human rights, and civic participation. Elections were scheduled for September 24.

Thawing the Road to Democracy

Waves and waves of people poured through the streets of the capital, banging drums or pots and pans, ringing bells, and chanting slogans. For Ceca, it spurred memories of the protests in 1996 and 1997, the first phase of the mass movement for removing Milošević from power. In municipal elections across Serbia in November 1996, the united opposition, *Zajedno*[28]

[28] Zajedno was a coalition of opposition political parties: the Serbian Renewal Movement, led by the nationalist Vuk Drašković; the Civic Alliance of Serbia, led by CAA co-founder Vesna Pešić; and the Democratic Party, led by Zoran Đinđic.

("Together" in Serbian) scored multiple victories, including in the capital where pro-Western Zoran Đinđic was elected mayor. Milošević, however, claimed irregularities in the elections and denied the opposition their win. This sparked an eighty-eight-day protest by the people of Serbia; every day thousands of people marched through the streets of their cities and towns demanding their elected representatives be allowed to take their seats, and furthermore, calling for election reform and freedom of the press. Milošević eventually capitulated to the first demand, but then intensified his suppression of the media and the rights of the people. Zajedno, however, dissolved later that year because of ideological differences and fighting within the coalition. In 1998, Milošević passed draconian legislation, the Public Information Law, which censored media not in keeping with state-run propaganda and prohibited all foreign broadcasts into the country.

Despite the defeat of 1996-1997, on October 5, 2000, Ceca felt a positive energy similar to those previous nonviolent protests: the music, the use of humor and satire to ridicule the regime, the youth all around her. "I have these pictures in my head from 1997. There was a very big snow and the streets were totally frozen, but all the people were there"—people from all walks of life. In 2000, there were citizens from all areas of Serbia, now united against the man who had dragged them through nearly ten years of war, crippled their economy, spent exorbitantly on the military, flaunted corruption in his regime, caused an unemployment rate of over 50 percent, changed the constitution to ensure he would be president for another term, and just nine days earlier, refused to concede defeat to his challenger, Vojislav Koštunica of the

Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS).[29]

When Milošević refused to admit defeat and ordered a runoff election instead, the opposition called for a general strike across the country. The strike culminated on October 5, when Serbs from all corners of the country converged on the capital for a mass demonstration.

Throughout the day, Ceca and the other protestors paraded through the streets, chanting and beating drums, avoiding teargas used by the riot police, on their way to the federal parliament building for a rally and concert scheduled for the evening. "I don't remember at what time, and I couldn't see what was happening on the steps of the parliament, but people broke in and they started burning things." A dense black smoke was rising from the building and flames could be seen through the windows of the upper floors, and soon, like in the winter of 1996 and 1997, snow began to fall through the thick smoke. A protestor had reached the highest window of the building, or perhaps the roof, and started pouring out all the fake voters' ballots he had found in the parliament—thousands of forged votes for Milošević. "For hours and hours these fake votes were raining down—but not rain, more like snowflakes, because they were white."

With little visible citizen support, Milošević eventually conceded defeat. Well after midnight, after Koštunica had taken the concert stage and addressed the crowd as the new president of Serbia, Ceca made her way home with Ivan and several friends. They walked by the offices of the biggest newspaper, *Politika*, previously controlled by Milošević. The daily had printed the first edition of its paper as a free press. "That was very symbolic. It was a sign that there was no more regime, and it was a symbol of a free country and free press. That first print

[29] The DOS formed in May of 2000, a union of eighteen political parties intent on defeating Milošević in the presidential elections. In September, they agreed to support Koštunica as the presidential candidate, chosen because of his moderate and conservative leanings—as opposed to the other frontrunner, Đinđic, who was deemed too progressive, intellectual, and pro-Western. But Đinđic threw his support behind Koštunica, and the elections proceeded on September 24. Independent election monitors affirmed that Koštunica beat Milošević by an overwhelming percentage.

was given to all citizens for free." The headline for October 6, 2000: "Serbia on the road to democracy."

Managing Transitions

With Serbia on a new path and recovering from the Milošević era and war in Kosovo, Ceca continued her own healing and peacebuilding work. She had resigned from the university in September, thus expanding her horizons to explore other forms peace education and peacebuilding could take, particularly in a post-Milošević and postconflict situation. Free of the confines of academia and teaching her intense load of classes, Ceca was able to begin connecting her own loves and strengths in fresh ways, the first of which was with an international NGO, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR).

Ceca previously worked with UMCOR in 1999 as a consultant and trainer representing MOST on the project, Education for Peace in Primary Schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina. With her expertise and experience with Goodwill Classroom she was able to train teachers on a similar program and also evaluate the implementation of the program in the region. In one of her many trips to towns in Bosnia, she and her colleagues were carrying books and manuals on nonviolence for their fellow teachers when their bus was stopped at the border. "When the police questioned us about the books, I almost said, 'If there were more of these books there wouldn't have been war.'" But she refrained, knowing it wouldn't have helped them clear the border; she simply said they were gifts to libraries in Zenica and Sarajevo.

Ceca's work on the Education for Peace project in Bosnia also involved two peace camps for youth. The camps in the summer and winter of 2000 each included thirty kids from all areas of Bosnia: ten Serb children from Republika Srpska, ten Bosnian Muslims, and ten Croats. Ceca

was able to bring Dina to the second session, where "she developed these amazing friendships." Although the youth were from different ethnicities and from generally isolated territories within Bosnia, Ceca and the other trainers and evaluators discovered "this main insight. When the kids expressed the problems they were having at the camp, they were just regular early adolescent problems. They had nothing to do with where they came from or their ethnicity. They were just teenagers being teenagers."

While Ceca was consulting on these projects for UMCOR, she was still performing her main job at the university; it was not until she left the university that she found a permanent job with UMCOR in Belgrade as their Capacity Building Programme Manager. In a marked departure from the world of the university and the local NGO level of MOST, Ceca was now a manager in an international NGO setting, dealing primarily with marginalized groups in central and southern Serbia.

Southern Serbia, also referred to as the Preševo Valley by the international community and ethnic Albanians, but called Pčinja county by Serbs, borders Kosovo and has a majority ethnic Albanian population. During the war in Kosovo and the NATO bombing of Serbia, there were numerous clashes between the Albanians and Serbs in the region. Around the time Ceca took her job with UMCOR, an insurgency by the Albanian group the Liberation Army of Preševo, Bujanovac, and Medveđa had just been quelled by the new Belgrade government, but tensions remained high.

With the continual potential for violence in southern Serbia and its virtual neglect because of the visibility of Kosovo in the eyes of the international community, one of Ceca's tasks was to help develop civil society in the region. There were three components to her job, the first of which involved training local organizations on how to become full-fledged NGOs and

particularly, how to write project proposals in order to apply for funding. A second component was providing technical assistance, such as computer equipment and furniture, for newly formed organizations, while a third component was the direct financial support through grants for the implementation of their projects. Along with supporting groups in southern Serbia that focused on multiethnic and multicultural projects to combat discrimination and ethnic hatred, she also sought out women's groups, the Roma population (a significant minority in both central and southern Serbia), organizations working for children's rights, and anti-trafficking groups.

In central Serbia, Ceca's work focused mostly on Kraljevo, known as the "city of refugees" because of the huge influx of Kosovo Serb refugees who fled after Serbian forces withdrew from the province at the end of the NATO attacks in 1999. The refugees were received coldly by the Kraljevo inhabitants, who had already absorbed thousands of refugees from the fighting in Bosnia and Croatia. In her role at UMCOR, Ceca supported small organizations working with refugees and the local population to promote tolerance. In Ceca's one-year term with UMCOR, between twenty and thirty groups were funded. "At the time, my expertise had really been creational: I had created programs, workshops, objectives, and implemented ideas. But now I was actually managing and organizing. I learned a lot in terms of networking and making strong connections," which helped her in the years to come as she worked with groups all over Serbia. When her work with UMCOR over, she learned of a job implementing a project for CARE International.

Mismatched Socks

In the town of Priboj, before their sixth and final performance, Ceca's field director told her to get on stage: "OK, Ceca, let's do it. It's now or never." She had directed and trained all the

performers, and even done some acting during the preparatory phase, but in the live productions, she had yet to take the spotlight. Ceca agreed, but noticed as she was preparing that one of the actors, Farko, was missing. It was out of character for him to be missing—he loved the stage and being the center of attention; theater had given him a confidence he did not have before. Ceca was worried about him, but also concerned about who would take his place. She let her field director fret over that and prepared to take the stage.

During the last act of the production, Ceca noticed someone cross in front of her, just in front of the stage. It was distracting, but she focused on the scene. Before long, however, that same person was screaming and hyperventilating, making a hysterical scene directly in front of the stage. She panicked when she realized it was Farko, but managed to stay in character while someone from backstage dragged him out of the building. When the performance finished, she rushed backstage to find that an ambulance rushed him to the emergency room, where they had given him sedatives. But he had disappeared again.

Ceca and Farko, short for Fahrudin, were performing in a production entitled “Different is Beautiful,” part of the Tolerance Building for Youth in the Sandžak Region project of CARE International. In April of 2002, Ceca inherited a project proposal and grant on multiethnic tolerance from her predecessor at CARE, but there was no concrete plan for implementation. She was eager for the opportunity: “If I see something on paper, I can make it come alive.” Moreover, with this idea of a peace project using the arts, she at last had the opportunity to apply the skills and passion she had discovered in a 1998 training in Bosnia on theater-in-education (TIE) methodology. It had incorporated concepts such as inclusion, creativity, self-expression, and the arts, which she had already used in projects like Goodwill Classroom, but now she saw how it could be used in drama, a medium she had not worked in since her traveling theater

company in the late 1980s. The training in Bosnia had been transformational for her, in much the same way as the conflict resolution training with Diana Francis, back in 1993. But several years later, the passion for theater was still buried "in the soil, in my heart. I knew it would blossom eventually."

The primary objective of TIE methodology is to use theater elements and drama for educational purposes. It "uses the strengths of theater to communicate difficult concepts in an open and readily accessible form and [creates] a safe but active space in which young people can explore these issues for themselves,"[30] in other words, "dealing with serious things but in a fictional context," and therefore a secure space. And there were serious things to address in the Sandžak region, the southwest area of Serbia proper, bordering Bosnia. The rural region has a large Bosnian Muslim population living in close proximity to Serbs, and this less than a decade after the end of the war. The theater productions would include youth representatives of both communities, and the audience—who would also interact with the participants on stage as a feature of TIE methodology—would also include both Serbs and Bosnian Muslims.

Partnering with Ceca and CARE was the director of the Center for Drama in Education and Art (CEDEUM), Ljubica Beljanski-Ristić, a former drama teacher of Dina and Ceca's chief contact in TIE: she had shared with Beljanski-Ristić her profound experience at the TIE training in 1998, and the director had in turn recommended Ceca for the project with CARE. Together with other actors and teachers well-versed in the methodology, they taught youth leaders and educators from six towns in the Sandžak—Sjenica, Prijepolje, Tutin, Novi Pazar, Priboj, and Nova Varoš—on the use of TIE as a way to "start dialogue about negative social phenomena,"[31] such as ethnic and religious intolerance. They focused on five key ideas that express the intent

[30] *Evaluation of the project Tolerance Building for Youth in Sandžak Region, Serbia* (CARE International in Serbia & Montenegro, Canadian International Development Agency).
[31] ibid.

and process of the methodology: openness, creativity, cooperation, trust, and respect for others. From the leaders' youth networks in the region they drew the adolescent participants for the productions and began creating the scenarios they wanted to stage. They conceived of three storylines illustrating their motto "Different is Beautiful": the potential of love between a Bosnian Muslim girl and a Serb boy; an actual story from the town of Sjenica concerning whether a Christian Serb can help construct a Muslim mosque; and finally, a scene called "On the Border," which explored differences between two fictional tribes, and therein, the concept of the "other."

As rehearsals continued, they began publicizing their performances. Their slogan, "Different is Beautiful," was depicted on their posters and publications by two mismatched socks: one royal blue and the other bright orange. In place of tickets, audience members were given a pair of these different colored socks upon entrance to the theater. After the scenes were staged, a facilitator invited the audience to ask questions and give feedback on their own understanding of the concepts expressed. Audience members were also welcomed on stage to join the group and form their own ending, a conclusion "not common in everyday life, in order to change the perspective of the audience of what happens in everyday life."[32] The group was prepared for, even anticipated, negative audience reactions to such sensitive subjects, but the overwhelming response "was that they were just so happy that somebody finally spoke openly about these things."

Ceca found that the real tolerance and relationship building came not necessarily in the final productions in front of and interacting with the audiences—though she believed that occurred as well—but in the rehearsal and preparation phase when the kids discovered new ways to express themselves and interact with one another. Furthermore, "they were the authors of their

[32] ibid.

pieces." The coordinators and leaders did nothing to impose their beliefs or attitudes about the sensitive issues they were dealing with. The kids found their opinions were always legitimate.

> For me, the most precious thing really was that these young people became friends, these people of different origins. I think we initiated dialogue among the audiences, but what we developed among ourselves—that was very important. It animated these young people to think about things in their lives. I think they felt life, not just the stage.

It was during this time of preparation, learning, and engaging in drama and creative ways of expression that Farko, a street kid from Novi Pazar, was empowered. He was never a top student in school due to his hyperactivity and need for attention. In the initial rehearsals, "while everyone was silent, he was talking. While everyone was talking, he was singing." But "he found his place in the project.

> He wanted to be in the center, and so many of the activities we did created a space for him to be in the center, to be energetic, to act out. Over time, he became more calm and found himself as part of the team. He found that his contribution was valuable and he was very creative.

Thus, when the final production in Priboj was about to begin, Farko could not control his overwhelming emotions about their last performance together. "He had these fantastic experiences and when he thought that everything would be over, he couldn't stand the anxiety that the project would be over and that we wouldn't see each other on a regular basis again." Ceca knew the hysterical scene he made was simply a symptom of something else. He did not appear until the next morning when Ceca and the coordinators were preparing gifts and certificates for all the participants.

"Ceca, I'm leaving now. I have to get back to my job."

"Well, Farko, in that case, it was really nice meeting you. Unfortunately, if you leave early, you won't get your final gifts from me."

She intuited that "he was like a little kid who wants chocolate and you tell them that if they're not good, they won't get the chocolate." If she took away the prospect of a final gift, a lasting recognition of what they had experienced together, he would think again before he opted to leave.

"OK, Ceca. I guess I can stay a bit longer," he responded to the threat, just like he wanted his chocolate.

> I tried to convince him that this may be the end of the project, but it could be a new beginning. And Farko, this street kid from the Sandžak, went on to study psychology at the university in North Mitrovica in Kosovo. It is a Serbian university, but he went there. I saw him later in Mitrovica and he was so happy, so successful.

A Cadre of Youth Workers

The production of "Different is Beautiful" finished in February of 2003, but Ceca stayed with CARE on the senior management team and on various projects until the summer of 2004, including another TIE production, "A View from the Other Side," this time implemented in southern Serbia. In the town of Bujanovac, with a mixed population of Serbs and Albanians, she organized a festival on TIE, another exhausting but fulfilling accomplishment: "Nobody had done anything like that before in Bujanovac. We were breaking the suspicion from the two sides and confronting all these fears and anxieties. It was so, so powerful." She also worked directly with the Roma population in a youth program called Broadening Horizons, with the objectives of developing their life skills and self-confidence. The youth were also provided access to vocational courses to increase their chances of employment.

Like many NGOs, the majority of CARE International's programs were grant-based, meaning a job like Ceca's was not permanent. With many transitions occurring at that time

within CARE, and the likelihood that the organization would pull out of Serbia altogether, Ceca applied and was accepted for a job at Forum Syd, a Swedish NGO that had recently taken over implementation of a program now known as the Balkans Programme. Ceca's new position as Senior Education Manager of the Bachelor of Education in Community Youth Work involved overseeing and implementing the curricula for all components of the undergraduate degree.

The need to recognize community youth work as a profession was a specific draw for Ceca when she learned of the position. Forum Syd defines community youth work as

> a process of empowering and supporting youth by offering opportunities of various kinds, complementing those of home, formal education and work, to discover and develop their personal resources of body, mind and spirit. Through informal education processes, youth work enables young people to increase their understanding and knowledge of themselves and the world they live in, encouraging and supporting young people's participating [sic] in creating change towards just societies.[33]

These objectives were to be reached through academic course work that covered violence and nonviolence, multiethnic prejudices, theories of learning and education, conflict resolution and transformation, and community development. As a young person in Tito's pioneer organizations, and as an adult watching the thousands upon thousands students who joined Otpor—not necessarily because of the politics involved, but because it gave them something to be a part of—Ceca was acutely aware of the importance of connecting with young people, developing their sense of self and the world through positive interactions, and ensuring they become active members of society.[34]

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[33] *Programme Overview* (Forum Syd Balkans Programme).

[34] Ceca is sensitive to the links between pioneer activism during the time of Tito and the contemporary theory of community youth work. Ceca, in her contribution to a forthcoming publication by the Center for Nonviolent Action, writes, "Movements like Tito's pioneers . . . had the goal of fitting youth into a very structured and controlled society, while the main intent of the modern concept of youth work is providing support to youth so they can find their own place in social community . . . and in their development and possibilities of self-discovery." However, she does not dismiss the impact pioneer activism had on her peace activism and promotion of youth work, in that some "notions and values I accepted then have remained for life, but not in a negative sense."

Implementing a project with those goals was an appropriate match for her previous experiences in academics, her managerial skills, peace activism, work with youth, and promotion of creative education.

When Ceca arrived on the job, she quickly discovered there were no files from the previous eight years of the program to work from, no project plans, no paper trail—it would be another pilot project, in the same way her work with CARE was fresh and experimental. Ceca immediately became "coordinator, manager, supervisor, sister, friend, counselor," and more to the seventeen students in the program. The students came from various regions of the former Yugoslavia, which contributed to the goal of the university program "not only to provide a cadre of youth workers and trainers who will support a voluntary youth service, [but] also to address the dual transitions of countries moving from war to peace and from communism to democracy."[35]

To execute the two-and-a-half-year program, Ceca immediately took up the immense logistical tasks of running a part-time undergraduate degree course with no faculty and no university premises. The Bachelor of Education course is part of the University of Jönköping in Sweden, so Ceca had to use all of her previous contacts and also create new ones in order to find professors, mentors, lecture space, accommodations, and travel arrangements to Sarajevo, Novi Sad, Vukovar, and Belgrade. In addition to this mass coordination of people and ideas (Ceca also had the responsibility of deciding on lecture topics and how much time should be allotted for each), she was a supervisor and mentor to her seventeen students, and had to "personally compile the booklets and manuals" for the program. The job was overwhelmingly managerial, but she appreciated there was also room for creation and the development of content. However, "my work with Forum Syd absorbed me much more than all other jobs I've had. This was my fifth

[35] *Programme Overview* (Forum Syd Balkans Programme).

pilot project in the last five years. It takes all my strength and energy, all my being." In addition to traveling all over the region, she also visited the University of Jönköping on a regular basis, and supervised her students in their practical placements in Northern Ireland. Though exhausted, in February 2007 "seventeen students will graduate. That's a good final product," as is the knowledge that she is contributing to the recognition of youth work as a profession in the postwar society of the former Yugoslavia.

Craving Boredom

The waves of reform and positive change crested and then broke on the shore of the Serbian political scene in the intervening years between the October revolution of 2000 and Ceca's work with Forum Syd until 2007. Parliamentary elections were held in December of 2000 and the DOS won the majority of seats, installing Zoran Đinđic prime minister, a more powerful office than that of the president, held by Koštunica. In the face of Koštunica's unwillingness to arrest Milošević, who had been indicted for genocide and war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at The Hague in May of 1999, Đinđic had him arrested and extradited in May of 2001. Đinđic also filled his cabinet and ministerial posts with reform-minded thinkers, including Tinde Kovač-Cerović, Ceca's former supervising professor and colleague, as Deputy Minister of Education.

> The year 2000 was such a crucial one in all our struggles and wishes that a better future really would come to Serbia. And it really started afterward, especially in my sphere with Tinde initiating all these reforms, inviting people from NGOs, getting civic education in the schools. But Đinđic was seen as too young, too intellectual and progressive. Not many people in Serbia could identify with him. Progressives are a minority in Serbia.

Likely because of his attempts at reform, Đinđic was assassinated on March 12, 2003, in front of the main government building in Belgrade.[36] "He had this characteristic which we call *inat*. It's kind of resistance or rebellion: 'If somebody tells me I cannot do something, I will not stop. I'll prove to you I can do it.' He had inat. But then he was killed, and literally, all these changes stopped."

The following year, 2004, a significant rise in extreme nationalism was evident in the country, as the presidential election[37] ended in a runoff vote between Đinđic's friend and fellow reformist, Boris Tadić, and Tomislav Nikolić of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS). Tadić was victorious, but to progressives like Ceca, the strong showing by the radicals and the prominence of Vojislav Šešelj, their jailed leader, was disturbing. Šešelj, the leader of the SRS and a suspected war criminal, surrendered to The Hague in February of 2003. From prison he has been leading his ultranationalist party and calling for a Greater Serbia, "territorial pretensions" to lands that make up a great deal of Croatia and Bosnia, and which were sources of contention in the wars in the 1990s. His name is first on the party's list for parliamentary elections in January 2007, a candidate while he stands trial for crimes against humanity in the wars of the 1990s.

Several major events occurred in 2006, including the death of Milošević. He was found dead in his jail cell in March, still on trial after months of delays because of his faltering health. When he was first arrested and extradited, Ceca was satisfied:

> Yes, Milošević did crimes to others and should be punished for that. But he also sacrificed his own people, and much of the world is not aware of that. I think generations have been sacrificed because of the side effects: living in sanctions, living in poverty, carrying all this blame for everything that happened in the

[36] The accused mastermind of Đinđic's assassination is still on trial nearly four years after the prime minister's death. The suspect, Milorad "Legija" Luković, is the leader of an organized crime circle with links to Milošević. The group is known as the Zemun clan because of their ties to the Belgrade suburb of Zemun.

[37] Koštunica remained president of what was the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which changed to the union of Serbia and Montenegro in February of 2003. He became prime minister of Serbia after parliamentary elections in December of 2003.

> former Yugoslavia. We are not all responsible for that, but we were put in the same cage.

Though disappointed in the fact that he escaped justice, she was not entirely disappointed in the end: "I actually think he got more followers, even new followers, just by the fact that he was shown on television giving his defense, defending Serbs, and saying bad things about the West. People would say, 'Oh, he showed them. Look how well prepared he is.'" She hopes the passion and mindset of his new and old disciples will follow Milošević to the grave.

Also in 2006, Montenegrins voted to be independent from the union of Serbia and Montenegro, and "we [Serbs] got our independence by pure inertia." With the secession and independence of Montenegro, Ceca has now lived in four different countries—the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Serbia and Montenegro, and now, Serbia—all while living in the exact same city. Though the split with Montenegro did not involve violent conflict, the new stand-alone state of Serbia then had the opportunity to create a new constitution, replacing the 1990 document which was influenced by Milošević. The proposed constitution unanimously passed parliament and was sent to the citizens to vote on in a referendum. Though the public voted for the constitution,[38] there were several contentious issues. An opposition political party, the Liberal Democratic Party, and many local NGOs were incensed because of the lack of transparency in the compiling of the document, and moreover, the way the citizenry was deprived of public discussion and debate of the constitution. The issue that received the largest outcry from the international community, and from liberal voices within Serbia, was the phrase that Kosovo is an "integral part" of Serbia. With talks on the final status of Kosovo ongoing, the government "obviously thinks this will help them" obtain political and

[38] Kosovo Albanians, Albanians from southern Serbia, and some residents of Vojvodina boycotted the referendum. Voter turnout in all of Serbia was nearly 54 percent.

territorial control of the province (which has been under the administration of the United Nations since the war in 1999), but it only "polarizes the situation even more."

But it is the nationalistic rhetoric, exemplified even in the first line of the new constitution, that infuriates Ceca the most: "Serbia is the state of the Serbian people and all its citizens." Tadić, still the president of Serbia, had pushed for the elimination of the ethnic reference and wanted, "Serbia is a state of all its citizens," the phrase that would have ensured a civic state, as even Milošević's constitution affirmed.

> I cannot identify with a constitution that says Serbia is a country of Serbian people. It is not now and never has been. Serbia is a country of people who live in Serbia, including Bosnian Muslims, including Albanians, including all the minorities, Hungarians, Rusins, Slovaks, Roma. It is not only Serbs. If you want civic participation in a country, you need to see this as a country of all the people who live there, regardless of their ethnic origin.

Other nationalistic notions include making Cyrillic the only official alphabet in the country (both Cyrillic and Latin were official alphabets in the 1990 constitution), and the enshrining of *Bože Pravde*, or "God of Justice," as the national anthem. The Serbian Orthodox song is originally from the nineteenth century and therefore, refers to a Serbian monarchy; in making it the national anthem, any lyrics referring to the monarchy have been changed to the "Serbian race." Thus, the anthem now contains lines such as "God of justice, save and nourish/Serbian lands and the Serbian race."

> They changed the song from *Hej, Sloveni*, the hymn of Yugoslavia, to this Orthodox Christian song. What if I'm not Orthodox? How can I identify? Why should I identify? What about the citizens who are from a different religious background? For me, this is totally unacceptable.

Tadić eventually compromised his stance on the ethnic reference in the first line, and allied not only with Koštunica, but also with the radicals (SRS) and Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) to get the constitution passed.

With setback events like these in the past several years, Ceca is weary from the need to be resilient.

> ‘Resilience’ is a favorite term used by people to describe this characteristic of survival. Yes, during the wars and the inflation and sanctions, my husband and I were resilient and managed not to go insane, not to get mad, not to leave the country. But it was such an effort. I don’t want to be resilient again—I want to be bored. I want to live normally. I don’t want to hear about the murders and the bombs and the hatred. I want not to have uncertainty for my kids. And those hopes were in Đinđic for me, in all these changes he was implementing so Serbia would not be closed from the rest of the world and that we could live normally.

With Đinđic’s platform, Ceca believed the opportunity was ripe for a grassroots reform of Serbia. As opposed to the typical top-down approach to conflict resolution that may silence the gun but not the hatred and bitterness in the hearts of perpetrators and victims, Đinđic’s reforms—such as including people like Tinde in his government and being receptive to the voice of civil society—embodied the bottom-up process that could lead to lasting peace.

Though her work has been immensely fulfilling and has given purpose, in her own life, to all the senseless destruction that has occurred in the former Yugoslavia, the work has also spread her thin. “I am a person who needs to be 100 percent in a situation. When I am doing something, I am totally committed to it. I give myself whole.” In 1996 when Ceca was working full-time at the university, she was also giving trainings for Goodwill Classroom and another MOST project called Active Learning, she was working in the refugee centers with the Group 484, she was holding trainings in Bosnia and Serbia for Oxfam on diversity issues for disabled people, and she was, of course, a mother and wife—the physical, mental, and emotional stamina needed to be wholly in each of these places, all virtually at the same time, while also dealing with the realities of conflict in the region, was grueling.

And little has changed in Ceca’s work. In addition to the hundreds of trainings for Goodwill Classroom over the seven years of her involvement; work with refugees from 1992-

1996; workshops with the School for Democracy; trainings in NGO development with UMCOR; teaching TIE methodology in her CARE projects; workshops with Roma youth, also with CARE; and the intensity of work at Forum Syd, there have been multiple other projects and hundreds more people reached in her short fifteen years of peace activism: Active Learning; the MOST project Practicing Democracy—Constructive Debate as a Model of Competent Political Confrontation; workshops for women activists in multiethnic Macedonia; another MOST project, Multiculturalism and Local Initiatives; youth workshops in North Kosovska Mitrovica; Let's Have a Talk, But Not a War Talk, a campaign in Serbia and Montenegro on the need to reduce tensions between the two states; Dialogue is the Key, yet another MOST project; a reproductive health campaign for women in the Sandžak region; *Tolerance in My World*, an illustrated book on multiculturalism for youth; Next Stop Serbia, an exchange program modeled on Next Stop Soviet, involving students from Denmark; a documentary on Peace Studies; a youth television program, "Right to Know," on issues facing teens; and another documentary, "Reporting the Past," made in conjunction with BBC on how Serbs are confronting the events of the war. All of this work, simply because "peace activism is my only authentic response to the situation in which we are living."

But to list all of the projects and campaigns and trainings and workshops is a futile attempt to label and measure her work. Though there is a word for "psychologist" in Serbian, there is no word for "trainer." For Ceca, her work, indeed her life, does not consist of characterizing herself as a trainer or a psychologist, it is not about the number of projects or the number of trainings held in each project—her life is measured by the people she meets, the genuine relationships forged, and the process of connecting them to others in her web of networks. "I always kept this thread through all my projects, linking people and trying to bring

them on for this or that project. I'm like an individual resource center." The motto of Forum Syd, "A meeting place for change," is as appropriate to describe Ceca.

While the work and travel have often left her drained, she finds reserves of energy in her friendships, primarily in her "girl circle," five close-knit women, including her sister-in-law, Slavica.

> At some point, my 'girl circle'—my friends and colleagues—and I were dreaming of going somewhere else: 'Let's just forget about this poverty, this despair, this apathy. Let's go somewhere *together*. If there is somewhere on the planet where we could all go together like a little commune with our partners and our kids, that will be enough.' It was a bit childish, but that thought was something that made my life easier or happier back then.
>
> And then I found my oasis in Belgrade. I adore my home, my family, all the things I have made. I have this ideal connection of work that I love, getting to travel a lot, but also being in my country, speaking my language, and being surrounded by the people who mean so much to me, without whom I would not be who I am.

Ceca's networks, however, extend far beyond Belgrade and even the former Yugoslavia. Her trip to England in 1993 first allowed her to feel part of "that wider world," that "the planet is my place of living, not just tiny Serbia." She keeps mementos of all the places she has been, as well as those sent to her by friends abroad, to remind her that the "girl circle" extends far beyond Belgrade, far beyond gender, far beyond borders of any kind.

> I can identify myself very locally: I am a citizen of the Dorćol area of Belgrade. Or I can identify myself as a citizen of the world. I can say that on the planet there are people in spots who have a web of things in common. Sharing our ideas about peace, we do create a totally new order of life in the world.

And, even without reform-minded politicians in power, create peace from the ground up.

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