

Greetings from Jelena, invited by Skøyen and Zagreb Rotary Clubs to attend the ISS (International Summer School of Oslo University) (Summer 2008)

It's really difficult to say everything in few words. Summer that I was in Norway was the best time of my life. This was experience where I saw that things can be different and better. **The Norwegian civilization showed me that value of equality and compassion for people in need one day can be active in our society too. I hope that this day will come soon.**

While my plane was approaching Oslo through the window I could see the beauty of this country. Under me there were a lot of lakes. The grass was so green that in one moment I was thinking: "Is this Norway or Ireland? Am I in the right plane?" My picture of Norway was ice and coldness and now here I see such a beautiful nature. I was thinking: "I'm going to have a great time here." And I was right.

After we landed our first stop was Lillehammer. There was the Nansen Academy, the humanistic centre. One of the goals of this place is to bring peace in the places where there has been war. So I was here because of the project *Peace on Balkan and Middle East*. Here **I encountered people from Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Azerbaijan. For me the interesting experience was the first morning when in a class I found out that a boy, sitting next to me, is from Serbia. At that moment I was surprised with anger in me. I was angry on him because of everything that Serbian army done to my people and my country. After few minutes when my feelings came down I told to my self: "Ok. The soldiers really done some bad things but HE didn't do anything. When the war was going on he was a child like me and he couldn't do anything. " Then I heard his side of the story and I was surprised when I found out that a lot of time people from Serbia because of political leaders didn't know that there was a war in Croatia. Politicians hold media and they didn't give true information to the people. This was transformation for me.** We were 20 people included in this project and the connection that we created here was very important when we came to ISS. I was feeling like I always have a "safe place" where I can come if I have problems. We where there for one another but also we had the freedom to meet other people. Now I can say that after this I have some best friends from Serbia.

For me one of the best things at ISS was meeting people from all over the world. This was something that I was dreaming to experience since I was 15 years old. At the ISS 2008, there were **500 people from 93 countries.** I was having **a breakfast with people from Palestine,** going on **lesson with boys from Italy and Africa,** having **lunch with Americans** and going to **walk with friends from Australia, Greece or Azerbaijan.** On one place I could see the similarity and the differences between us. We all want the same i.e to help people from our countries. **We want to help them to have a better and more satisfying life.** But the way we are going to achieve that is different because the problems in our countries are different. So for me one of the best events on ISS was *International cultural evening.* That evening I could see richness and soul of other cultures. We saw that in food, pictures, music, dance and movies. That night the sentence of ISS: **“Come to Norway, meet the world!”** became true and alive.

Except of meeting other civilizations here I had opportunity to see Norwegian culture. I **learned a lot at my course *Contemporary Norwegian Society.*** We were learning this topics: Norwegian identity and values, History from Vikings till today, Fairytales, Immigration and Minorities in Norway, Political Parties and system of Government, Prison system, Drugs and Alcohol in Norway, Public Health system, Norwegian Culture – Language, Literature, Art and Music, Public Health system and The Role of Religion in the Welfare State, Gender and Family, Norway and Nature: Environmental Issues, Norway and Oil Money, Norway and the World – EU, NATO, UN and other organizations; Norway and the World – Peace Building Activities. The most important thing from our lesson was that while we were learning about Norway, at the same time we were talking how things in our country are. **We were talking about problems and trying to find a way for how to solve them.** Also at the Norwegian Cultural evening we saw the dance, music and stories from Norway. That evening everything I was learning was alive in front of me. The memory on this will forever stay in my heart and mind.

The Opening Ceremony that we had in City Hall was like a story from the Fairytale. I was feeling like a princess at the ball. The lights was so shine, the Mayor in his speech showed us that we are very welcome here and the view on the harbour from the City Hall showed us the beauty of this city. When I was in Bergen I was able to see the similarity in towns. Bergen and Oslo are not so big like Zagreb but in them you can feel the warmness and

the kindness of the people. When I was asking for some information and help everyone gave me immediately.

This is something that I'm going to remember.

At the end I would like to say: **"Thank you all!!"** The big thanks to Lars, Arne, Inger and Eivind Bordewick. You all make my last weekend in Norway unforgettable. Lars thank you for all the places we went to see together: King palace, Ski Museum, Nobel Peace Institute and the lunch in Chinese restaurant. Arne thanks for time that I spent with Lars and you in your cottage. And at the end Inger and Eivind thank you for love and time that you gave me. In your house with you I was feeling so welcome like I'm your daughter. Thank you for teaching me how to play bridge and also for all other advices that I'm going to take in life with me.

I really had a great time in Norway. And at the end I would like to say thanks to Petter Rasch and Per Gustav Lindeberg. Because of your interest for me while I was at ISS, **I felt safe**. I always felt that if I have any problem you will always be there for me.

You all made my Summer 2008 experience that I'm going to remember for whole life.

Thank you all for it!!

Jelena Ivelic, August 15th 2008