

Lepa Writes from Sarajevo

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War and Activism

Editor:

In the May 1995 issue, I noticed an error in editing. On page 12, there was an apostrophe in the word "Hers" never takes an apostrophe, when the noun modified is "ed." The same is true for "ours," "his," "whose" and "mine." We teachers had this in 5th grade English. We should be more vigilant in your editing, progressive publications like yours do provide leadership by setting the example in illiterate America.

For your December issue: The need of activism we need is labor organizing. The only way to respond to an economic crisis is to organize the organized, everywhere and anywhere. Women always benefit from economic crisis, non-discrimination clauses, contracts, a grievance procedure which is inherent in a union contract. Maternity child care benefits, paid sick leave, paid maternity leave in a union contract, and the like. If the unions get in the way, the workers must have to organize themselves. Wildcat. That is what happened in West Virginia, and is what is happening in the union there. More than saving a union must be done now.

Dear Oob,

I came back from Sarajevo and it did change my life. War is something else. It was an incredible experience each minute. Even though we came from Belgrade from where all the aggression started, people there were happy that we came, glad that somebody finally from 'the capital' dared to care about them, dared to be different than the regime's fascist politics. They were longing for us, that's what they told us. We cried with taxi drivers, with people on the streets, sellers in the small shops, with neighbors... Each one of them told us who to call and send regards. The thirty eight of us from the group, WE CARRIED BACK A THOUSAND LETTERS AND MESSAGES. You know, we from this country called Serbia or Yugoslavia, we cannot call them or communicate in any way. The killers stopped the phone lines, they know that those who love each other speak on the phone.

It was breath taking and so deep, inscribed in our bones and visions forever. Here is the letter that we wrote to women in Sarajevo after coming back. It might not be so clear for you who are so far away, but Serbo-fascists are on the hills around the town shooting ceaselessly. They already killed 10,500 people from Sarajevo (or all three ethnic origins), out of which 1,600 were children. They also keep the airport, so a tunnel exists underneath which was made in this war, and everyone who wants to enter the town has to go through this tunnel, one meter wide and one meter and a half high for half a mile.

How many people in this world live under the war siege?
Many regards, love and sisterhood,

Lepa

After the Boston Massacre, Cardinal Bernard Law requested a moratorium on clinic protests, which drew angry responses from other organizations. Both Rescue America and Joe Schiedler's Pro-Life Action League proudly declared on their hotlines that they had organized a successful phone campaign to keep the protests going; to do otherwise, they stated, would be to admit some sort of wrongdoing. Operation Rescue did cancel protests briefly, but soon changed its mind and was back on the streets. A few weeks later, Schiedler

outgrowth of twenty years of character assassination by the anti-abortion movement as a whole. It is a magnet that attracts mentally unbalanced people into a world where the war against Satan, personified by the abortion provider, is the all-consuming reality. In this fundamentalist world where authority figures and their Bible interpretations are not questioned, it is inevitable that some individuals would begin to perceive a direct mandate from God to take up arms against the ultimate enemy.

Sarajevo

(April 9-11 a group of people from Belgrade was in Sarajevo. The trip was organized by the group from Belgrade: LIVING IN SARAJEVO and the Association of Serbs in Sarajevo. After a year of waiting, for the first time permission was obtained from the Serbian Authority for such a trip (for thirty-eight people, including eighteen women). This is a letter the women from Belgrade wrote to women in Sarajevo after coming back.

For: Movement of Women in Sarajevo, Women 21, Women BiH, Women from Theater 55, Women from magazines ODJEK and DANI, and all the neighbors

From: Women in Black Against War, Autonomous Women's Center, Belgrade Women's Lobby, women from LIVING IN SARAJEVO

Dear our sister from Sarajevo

The eighteen of us who were three days among you, we wish to tell you that we came back. We wish to tell you that after leaving Sarajevo we passed the Adriatic Coast, and it was a beautiful sunshine day. Some of us had a desire, a crazy fantasy, to transfer all the people from Sarajevo... babies and women and men and those with injuries and those who are silent and the oldest... to transfer all of you to the sea, at least for six days, for five days, so that you can all lay on the beaches without fear, without the look of the other that kills now or later, without sounds that destroy soul and bones. So that we can cherish you with warmth. You all enjoy yourselves on the coast, and we who came from the other, from the third side we prepared for you to sleep, to eat, drink and smoke.

Yes, after your words from the occupied town, your faces who do not say about pain under the pain, after seeing injured men carried near us to the tunnel, after bullet storms that kill, after having to climb up to the mountain Igman in the snow and mud... the next day the bus has taken us to the sea in the sun. It was an experience of freedom, tranquillity and the wideness of the breath. There is no justice. Some of us looked at the sea with tears or pain in the chest, and from the sea images rose of your swollen hands from cold water, graves in the yards, hills that watch us, the big spot of blood on the corner of the streets Kralja Tomislava and Marsala Tita where on the 10th of April 1995 Maja Djokic lost her breath. She was 18,

coming back from volleyball, and a little bit further the spot of Munevra Selimovic, killed the same day. On the news Bosnia and Herzegovina, there was Maja's picture from childhood, she was moving a pencil through her hair and smiling. There is no justice.

We are writing to you with the knowledge about the complexity of the fact of where each of us came back and where each of us come from. It is extremely difficult not to feel wrath from the inequalities, where each of us sleeps tonight, not to feel the wrath of the injustice without immediate cause. And we didn't feel this wrath in you. But we did feel, from the tear to the laughter, the power of each of your individual commitment to overcome lethal faith of the proper name, proper land and blood. Maybe, in fact we couldn't really experience horrible danger caused by this decision: you say 'we want solidarity' and they kill, you say 'we want to live together' and they kill, you say 'we only want to breathe and listen to the music' and they kill...and so it goes every day and night on each voice of life. It is now more than 1000 days.

We came back changed more than ever. We are full of traces of your testimonies and our deep feelings that life is far more difficult for you that you wanted to show to us. We are full of anticipation of what you haven't said, of what is not sayable, of what is caught in the tear which did not happen, or in the tram that didn't pass. Women will remember.

We have seen that you have remained different among yourselves even though the killers from the hills want to reduce you to mere carriers of water or mere counters of the bullets, to invalids or names inscribed in the books of dead. They have not succeeded. They have not reduced you to one thought, even though you all share one condition of cellars, darkness and bullets. We have seen your different women's groups, we have taken your papers, books, statements. We have seen you in the theater, in newspapers, on the radio, on the television, on the streets: you are of all different names. We are fascinated. We have felt your decisions to defend the right of politics of difference and your wish to live together, and we are supporting you totally and ceaselessly in those politics.



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we will talk and write and speak about you. We will repeat ten thousand times how you are courageous and how much we love you. we will come to you again as soon as possible. Drinking coffee with you in Sarajevo touches our souls.

20th of April, 1995 for women of Belgrade

Lepa Mladjenovic
Jadranka Milicevic



off our backs aug 95