

Report of International Helpers Visit Heloise Jackson, Jorge Guerin and Lavasir Nordrum to Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia - 3rd to 9th October 2008

For the last few years, Bosnia and Croatia have been visited regularly by the International Helpers and later by the helpers Solihin and Sharifah Roberts from England. We have also included Serbia in our visit whenever possible and during that time we have been able to observe the benefits of constant kejiwaan support.

Heloise, accompanied by Josephine Bacikin and driven by Benedict (Alexander) arrived at the Belgrade latihan hall just as Lavasir and Jorge were finishing the opening of the two men candidates. Without further delay, the ladies (about 10) proceeded to do latihan as the hall was booked for aerobics an hour later. Over a light supper, we discussed the programme for the next day before the men left to do latihan.

Saturday 4th: The men started latihan whilst Josephine and Heloise went for a short walk. Soon after, the ladies from the group arrived with delicious home-made food which was tastefully arranged on a table in the hall. As we began a question/answer session immediately after the meal, some ladies from the Zrenjanin group (North of Belgrade) arrived. The questions were about the fast (having just finished Ramadan the previous week); what was the value of the different fasts from the Christian, Jewish, Muslim traditions etc..? what were the benefits of the fast? who could/should do it? how to do it ...? The International Helpers stressed that although the fast was not at all mandatory, it had very real benefits for those who did it. There were no differences between the different fasts if one followed them in the right way – that is: not just restraining eating, but quietening the bad habits of judging, criticism, anger etc... The IHs also talked about the benefit of doing the fast twice a week for a particular change in one's circumstances.

The topic of relationships between men and women came up and one woman asked what was the right course of action one should take if one felt that after joining Subud, they had now met their "soul mate", or they suddenly felt closer to someone else than their current partner? The International Helpers recommended extreme caution, a lot of patience and not to do anything precipitate as it was extremely difficult to be sure, particularly in the early stages of doing the latihan, that the feelings being experienced at that time, might not actually be lessons to be learned for that moment rather than definite signs to change course, since our purification was becoming deeper? Someone else asked whether they should always tell the truth? Again, it depended on the circumstances. To tell the "Truth" as we saw it, to anyone at anytime, could be damaging unless it was done with extreme caution and with great love towards that person. Besides what we believed to be "the truth" now might be completely different in 10 years' time after doing regular latihan!

The ladies then did some awareness testing which included "How a Serbian/English/French lady danced? what was the use of our hands at present? followed by some comparison tests such as "how did I pray and love myself before and after joining Subud?" We finished by doing some personal testing before the men took over the hall for latihan.



Benedict (Alexander)

We were off early on Sunday morning in a rented car to Banja Luka. Iskandar (was Smail), a Bosnian member, met us at the hotel, but sadly, because of some confusion about the arrival time, there were no ladies present. However, Heloise had previously met one of them, a young lady, in Belgrade. She had come by bus to be with the International Helpers. After a meeting and general talk about Subud the men present left to do a latihan in the cramped hotel room.

Monday 5th: Lavasir, Jorge and Heloise met Iskandar and Rifat, two Bosnian Subud members, at a ground floor garage which had been used as a warehouse. As we entered the large premises which stood under the living quarters of a house/flats, we could feel the lightness of the atmosphere. The men did a latihan whilst Heloise went for a walk. This garage had been found during an earlier visit by Solihin and Sharifah Roberts who had done some testing about its suitability as a space to be used for latihan. However, Iskandar was worried because he could not raise the funds for the rent, which he would have to pay within the next couple of days. The space is being used at present, on a part-time basis, for yoga practice and the idea is to use it for latihan a couple of times a week. The Bosnia group does not have any premises at present, and people tend to do the latihan in their own home. It was Iskandar's wish, who, having been to Belgrade and seen how beneficial for the members' latihan a group could be, was now determined to try to emulate his Serbian counterparts and form a solid group who would do latihan together rather than separately.



An exchange of text messages started between the International Helpers and MSF via Josephine in Serbia which resulted in MSF agreeing to donate the first 3 months' rent to help Bosnia to secure the hall. Let's hope and pray that it is the beginning of the growth of Bosnia which seems to have had many set-backs. One woman was present for the last latihan and Heloise having given her a contact name and number, encouraged her to seek the Subud group when she visits Moldova for her work the following week.

Unfortunately, when we got to Croatia on Tuesday, we were faced with the same story that seems to have become part of Subud in that country! Although, Tvrko and Antonela (a young Subud married couple) were very welcoming there were sadly no other members present who had been opened in the past. The latihan in the hotel room were followed by testing (both awareness and personal). After a delicious midday meal, cooked by Tvrko and Antonela in their beautiful flat, we had a last latihan in the afternoon before our departure from Zagreb the next day.

These visits had shown how Serbia is getting to be a solid and strong group, mainly thanks to Josephine's dedication towards the members there. There were now several men opened, the women having done the latihan without a single male member for a few years until now.

In Bosnia, again, thanks to Iskandar (Smail)'s dedication, the group is now showing signs of being more together. Let's hope the acquisition of this latihan hall will consolidate this small beginning.

In Croatia, the young couple there are very dedicated in their latihan practice, but being alone, need constant support. Let's hope that Subud Croatia will grow from this very small beginning when the time is right. Maybe the young helper, himself a Serbo-Croatian, who lives in Orgiva, Spain, at present but who is planning to move back to Croatia shortly, will help consolidate this very small beginning. He has been given Tvrko's address and phone number via Marc Vouga from Spain.

Thank you so much to all the members from these three countries for their warm welcome and their efforts to do all they can to make our stay as comfortable as possible.

With love to each and everyone.
Heloise, Jorge and Lavasir