



Youth Society for Peace and Development of the Balkans

Plovdiv - Bulgaria

Report on the Study visit
To Nizhniy Novgorod (05.12.2005)

Sarah ARAYA
Veselin ILIEV

1. Preparation for the study visit.

There was no information about arranged meetings before the arrival of the team. Later it came to our knowledge that there were no preparations in advance at all. Having in mind the fact that the visit was only per one day, that significantly restricted the whole action.

2. Information provided by Viktor Gurskiy:

Partners: organization against torture. Viktor has no links to the Russian Chechen friendship association.

Viktor participates in a number of activities that are not directly linked to CO like Advisory commission on HR in the town of Nizhni Novgorod, of which he is a vice chair. On that position though he is powerless and can not influence or lobby.

On the day of our arrival Victor has a meeting with the chair of the Advisory commission on HR, but unfortunately we were not invited.

He is also employed in the organization against torture, which proved to have many activities. There he is employed as a psychiatrist.

Several checks have been carried out on him and he has been questioned by a lady he believes to be KGB. The same lady during her checks has taken a document without which the organization can not operate. He refused to say her name.

3. Situation of the COs in Russia according to Viktor Gurskiy - his opinion is that the topic of CO has no practical reasons to be realized because of the following arguments:

- people are not interested in general of the topic of CO
- There is no one working with him on the topic of CO and activity in that sense is low
- He does not have support of other NGOs on the problems of CO.
- Laws and the system of applying for a CO status is extremely uncomfortable and totally not worth it for young men.
- There is no problem of escaping the official procedure without bearing the consequences. Viktor explained to us that there is no problem of escaping the military just by registering that you live some where else or by moving to live some where else. Having in mind the size of the country Victor's opinion was that is very possible and more than 3000 young men do exactly that every year in Nizni Novgorod.
- COs that work in hospitals are a good substitute for slaves they work a whole month for 500 rubles (which literally means three lunches) and do work that none of the employees want to.

- The administrative process of applying for a CO status is administered by **military structures together with the ministry of labor and social affairs**. Most of the problems come from the fact that the military and the police have bad image and often happens that they are not following the legal procedures of the Russian federation.
- Viktor noted that Russian politicians do not understand the concept of CO and prefer to have people illegally running from the army than to have a good and fair system of substitution of the military service with alternative civil service.
- Journalists do not write about the CO in Russia not because they are afraid but because they are not interested in the topic. They are also not interested in the topic of human rights according to him.
- In order to acquire an objector status you have to: send your application form to the military; after their decision they send your information to the labor departments.
- During your military service you can not apply for an objector status.

4. The new law for NGOs – The “Committee against torture” have made the first steps towards showing the government that the public does not agree with what is about to be done. A list with names and organizations against the new law is prepared and will be send to a number of places. The laims at giving the government total control over the work of NGOs all over Russia, as already reported.

5. The situation of Human rights organizations.

According to Vistor human rights organizations are under special attention in the country.

The government has formed good and fast mechanisms to keep people silent including individuals and NGOs. (The mechanisms include spontaneous checks such as: check of documentation, finances). Only HR organizations are checked by the courts according to him. Viktor was asked to provide information about all the people working for the organization with him and about all the people that visit the office every day. He did not fulfill their request that is why they came to him as already reported.

Human rights organizations are attacked by the government and they want to close them because they are considered agents of influence. The president Mr Puttinis is afraid of NGOs because their actions can not be controlled nor fore seen.

Some of the information from the reports of amnesty international was not verified such as: the things going around Mrs. Oksana, the version we were introduced by Viktor was that she was about to have children and she just quit work.

6. Meeting with the “Committee against Torture”

Present on the meeting were: Igor Kaliyapin, Olga Sadovskaia, Vesselin Iliev, Sara Araya, Viktor Gurskiy

The organization is composed from professionals working in the field of law, medicine mainly. The problems they are working on are connected with torture of people from the police. The organization is a coalition from organization, which are working on protection of citizens victims of the police. They have the practice of helping organizations which have problems with the courts and institutions. One of those organizations is the “Russia-Chechen friendship society.” Mr Islan Masshadov sends through the organization a letter to the “Russian nation” in which he expresses his desire bought nations to live in friendship and understanding. Mr Masshadov expresses his position that the reasons for the problems of the two nations are the political games of the Russian president Mr Putin. That is the starting point of the problems of the organization “Russian-Chechen friendship society”, it is an intrigue we did not understand more more about only that the letter from Masshadov was send in such a way that the normal citizens did not get hold of it so practically it aimed to serve a cause different than showing the people in Russia his good will to cooperate.

In Russia there is the office of the public prosecutor which is authorized to follow cases of people mistreated by the police. The problems arise from the fact that the two structures are close to each other and practically no body from the prosecutor soffice will raise charges against a “friend” from the police.