

## SERVAS PEACE SCHOOL PROJECT | TURKEY



### **An invitation to share the Project with Servas Italy | New land, New Seeds**

Servas Italy National Board through its Peace Secretary, Raffaella Rota and the Youth Group, were so kind to be interested in Servas Peace School in Turkey and invited me to be their guest for 6 days, during the celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Servas foundation .

Previous to this invitation the International Youth& Family Committee (Susana Martinez and Raffaella Rota) had done a good job in spreading and advertising the experience of Peace School in several different Servas countries, arising interests and curiosity.

Why did I go to Italy? I went there with 3 reasons;

- To introduce the 11 years old Servas Peace School in Turkey
- To talk about refugee issues in Turkey and display my movie; Naked
- To promote 'One Friend One World' Pen Pal Project between schools

Before this trip to Italy, I didn't know it was going to be a turning point in my life and for Servas Peace School. I had the chance to plant seeds of friendship and peace and Italy became part of life. From the very beginning, it was pretty nice feeling that I was not like a stranger in this country although it was the first time in Italy.

The wonderful programme consisted of 2 episodes;

- Mozzo/Bergamo Episode
- Tuscany-Servas Italy National Meeting Episode

### **Mozzo/Bergamo Episode:**

The warm welcoming of Natasha of the Youth Group at the airport and taking care of me nicely made me feel good as soon as I arrived in Bergamo.

Rafaella had already planned everything and ready to give a friendly hug. One can easily feel at home at her place. Meeting Rafaella's parents Luigi, Luigina and her daughter; Aurora and the lovely dog; Ares, after the presentations made me feel that I was going to have strong ties with these people and also with people of Servas Italy. The garden, the protective way of parents and hospitality just reminded me of my mother, sisters, my village, Turkey and Mediterranean culture.

After a short while, we hit the road and the programme started. First, we met town hall major of Mozzo, Bergamo who was very kind and interested. Then, I did the public presentation of Servas Peace School to Servas (Youth Group) and at the town hall.

Then public presentation of my movie; Corto «Naked» and discussion on refugee seekers and immigrants (topics common to Italy and Turkey) took place with local organization for welcoming Refugees (coop. Ruah, Il Porto, Csc Longuelo) at the Youth Center Polaresco, Bergamo. I realized that Turkey and Italy needed to exchange more experience related to refugee issues through Servas. This is a big potential of cooperation between two Servas countries. Honestly, I didn't know the people would be so interested in the school and my movie; Naked.



Mozzo (Bergamo) Town Hall-public presentation of Servas and Peace School project

Visiting schools of Primary School 4°classes Istituto Comprensivo F.Gatti Curno and Primary school «Mose del Brolo» in Mozzo as a teacher, was an interesting and fruitful experience for everybody. I was happy to see that children already had some background about peace, respect to differences and multicultural life. So it was a big pleasure to introduce my students, my school, my pen pal project and Servas Peace School to them. Children and teachers became so interested and we set up new cooperation for more children between Turkey and Italy to exchange letters. While talking with the cute children I was excited to learn Italian words and teach them Turkish and Arabic words in return. Simona Barsotti, the religion teacher and Nuccia Gasparini, the Welfare Administrator of local town hall welcomed me warmly and showed a lot of interest in the topics I brought with me into their school and town.

There is a saying in Turkish; “You can know a person well when you travel together”. Travelling with talkative, funny and friendly Italians (Rafaella, Anna, Giancarlo and Laura) from Bergamo to Tuscany where the Servas meeting happened was a big chance to share lots of things and become closer. The wonderful landscape of Tuscany on the way was just like hot chocolate over the ice cream.

Camaldoli is a village at the top of the Sacro Eremo Mountain. The moment I arrived there to the monastery I had the feeling that I was in a holy area. It was very true. The very old monastery hotel located on a cliff in the forest with a valley stretched in front of it and a pharmacy museum in the backside made me remember the old movie; Robin Hood. Then,



Servas Peace School with new friends

smiling nuns just appeared in front of me on the road. I met them and I was surprised to hear one of the nuns was speaking Arabic with me. By the way, at that moment, Servas people of Italy were arriving with broad smiles, hugging friends, speaking and laughing loudly as they were the ‘Italians’. Servas people of Italy seemed to me that they

were childhood friends and they met again after such a long time.

The nice tradition of Servas Italy is to meet twice a year in a remote area where even the cell phones hardly find network. This way, people stick together and become closer to each other. Also, many of the Servas members had been guests of one another which made almost everybody know each other. Servas Italy is a good family with some disagreements inside, which is quite normal. People treated me as a special guest every moment with their smiles and friendly conversation. The first evening, I made the presentation of my movie; Naked, which aroused much interest. The questions and comments of the people made the presentation more lively and productive. The second day was the Servas Peace School movie show time to almost 100 Servas people. While watching the movie and afterwards during the questions sessions I could feel that people were touched with the movie and what the school achieved in the last 10 years. The most impressive moment was when Roberto, the



New volunteers for next Peace School: a big traditional Italian family: 5 children and parents

photographer, brought a box and suggested to start a donation campaign for Peace School. I felt the tears in my eyes that moment but no one saw them. I could see that Servas people appreciated this school and wanted to do their best to support it. Another good news was that Servas Italy decided to fund young people to be able to volunteer at Servas Peace School next summer. It was the greatest news for me because we had fewer volunteers from abroad since the beginning of the war in Syria. This meeting created a big synergy and more people became interested in

Peace School and started to plan to attend. After sharing the movies, my ideas and dreams about Servas, I had the impression that people felt more close to me. During my stay we had many special talks with people on foot, at dinner and while doing some excursions. One more good result of this meeting was to create an atmosphere for new projects to promote peace among Servas people. The small walks in the forest by the small river with positive people around me singing in different languages made this meeting unforgettable. The smiling face and supporting looks of the wise person Luigi Uslenghi (founder of Servas in Italy, 40 years ago) always increased my energy. And he was not the only person at the meeting. On the other hand, the dance performance of Laura with Natasha and Angela (servas youth) with the theme of peace was so beautiful. Also, people enjoyed the music show of Paco Paquito with



Servas Italy Fantastico Youth Team

the wonderful hats, posters in this old building and library. Tree of Peace was also a wonderful idea. I was not surprised to hear everyone singing “Bella Ciao” as a final song of this lovely meeting.

At the end of this meeting, we had to say goodbye but it was also Ciao for the next meetings. It was the start of many things though. Lastly, I promised everyone to serve

them Kabab if they ever come to Antakya for the Peace School.

When we came back to Anna and her family's home I cooked them a traditional Kabab, ate on the ground from the same tray with our hands to have the feeling of share. It is the tradition in Antakya, Turkey where Peace School takes place.

\* Servas Italy has a big potential to spread many good things around the world,

\* Servas international Youth and Family Committee workers Raffaella Rota and Susanna Martinez Duro were very good in supporting and spreading information about the project on international level.

\* Servas Italy has usually old members with young ideas ☺

\* Servas people of Italy are like childhood friends together.

\* A strong bridge between Italy and Turkey has already been set up,

\* More meetings and projects should be carried out between Servas Countries,

\* Servas people should share experiences and develop projects with different organisations, too.

\* Raffaella Rota did great programme with Natasha Noreen, Aurora Boninelli and Sara Marini of Servas Youth Group to introduce Servas Italy and Turkey in Bergamo region.

\* I will never forget any moments I spent with Servas People in Camaldoli... Grazie for your interest and for making me part of you in a short time.

#### **Projects proposals:**

- More Servas Peace Schools in Servas countries.
- Servas Teachers' Exchange Programme (STEP) can be started between Servas countries. Teachers can visit each other, schools, share experience and plant Servas seeds in children.
- We can start a campaign to make the two towns Mozzo of Italy and Kemalpaşa of Turkey sister cities. Then many projects between two towns can be launched.

My dream is to build Servas Peace School Campus with houses of mud bricks among the olive trees in my village. It is a possible dream ☺

See you at the family meeting in Fano in August ☺

*With their vast background, Servas people cannot just travel!*

Ciao

Mehmet Ates

Servas Peace School Coordinator

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Servas Peace School Movie Trailer: <http://vimeo.com/329567596>

Full Movie- <https://vimeo.com/292632193> - password: freedom