

Story no.2.

Jasminka Cikaric (Minka)

Jasminka Cikaric is a twelve-year old girl and a regular pupil of the fifth grade at the elementary school „Mejdan“. She lives with two older brothers, two younger sisters, mother and step-father. Her mother is under a strong pressure by her husband to beg with her children and to bring money home. Mother, revolted by her position, for several times tried to leave her children at the Centre space, at the streets and parks, even at the Police station.

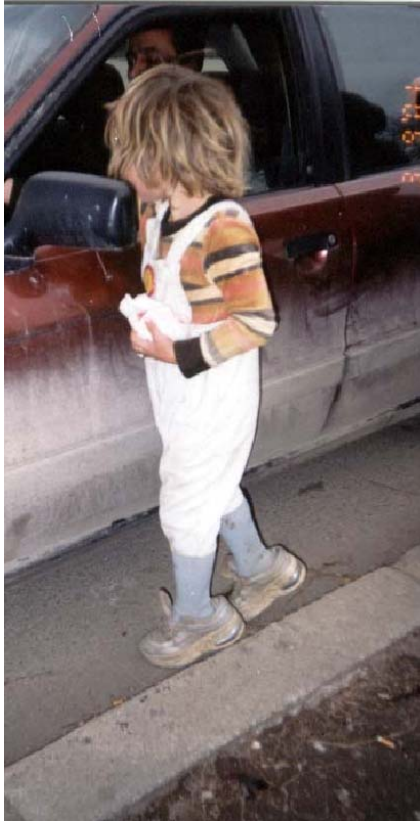
Living condition of this girl is extremely difficult. The six-member family lives in a poor, improvised house, and the house roof has many holes that make rain comes through. In the interior space there is one bed and a small stove. The stove is used only when children bring some wood from the local forest. The floor is wet and dirty but it is used for sleeping.

When work with „street children“ started in 1999, the Mobile Team of the Telex Centre was every day going to the streets, cross-roads and parks. It was easy to notice the small four-year old girl, followed by a bit older boy, how walks from car to car asking for money. She was dressed in a sleeping-suit that was very dirty, in pieces and at least two numbers bigger than needed. Her shoes were in different colours. She looked very untidy and neglected. It was obvious nobody cares of her, and everyone could have noticed her eyes - widely open when begging the passing-by people to give her some coins. When the Centre people came close to them, they looked surprised, and the boy moved aside, while she was expecting that some money will be put to her small and always open hand. Instead of money she has got some candies, and she put them all to her mouth, together with the covering paper. She was very hungry, obvious.

Tomorrow morning she was found again at the same place, like she was expecting the Centre people to come. She smiled and her eyes got bright when she received a toy and some candies. Her older brother was watching without confidence, but he, anyway, joined the group. Her brother just said that they had to work because of their parents' requirement. He also said that their father was buying drink for that money, also some food sometimes. If they didn't earn enough money they would be beaten, and that is why they were at the streets until quite late.

The girls said that her name was Minka and that she would have liked to play with toys, to draw and to eat candies, but she did not have any idea where to find it. It was not difficult then to bring her to the Centre. She acted a bit „wild“, carefully watching around the Centre, as she was facing with some things for the first time. In these days she was spending just some short time at the Centre, in fear that her parents might hear that she leaves the „working place“. Throughout the time, her stays at the Centre got longer. She liked to play, started adopting some hygienic and cultural habits, and enjoyed very much in brushing and dressing her hair. However, there were many days when she did not want to talk to anyone, staring at one point and

answering to any question with „I don't want“. Patience and time invested raised fruits: when Minka was six, she knew how to greet the people, to knock at the door when coming in, to thank for a present, and similar. Very soon she knew to count to ten, to diverse the colours, to write letters, and she was ready for entering first grade of primary school on regular basis. Unfortunately, as her mother never went to school and was illiterate, she did not want her children to attend school, not even to talk about the possibilities. Mother was individually counselled for a long time, but the discussions were not fruitful. She did not believe that her daughter knows letters. After mother was included to the workshops organised for children at the Centre, she realised what achievement their children raised. But it was again difficult for her to let the children go to school, because the family will not have any source for living then, and going to school also costs. Her Minka did not have any document. Minka was disappointed and she kept coming to the Centre, stressing very often that „her school“ (Centre Telex) is better than other schools. She was ten already and she was still out of school. Consulting the school teachers at the settlement where Minka lives and explaining them the progress achieved with this girl, there was agreed that she might try taking exams for the first three grades of elementary school. Minka made it with very good marks and entered the fourth grade on regular basis, as mother's attitude also changed in the meantime. There were provided all the necessary documents for her and the school material. The Centre also paid for meals at school for her. Thanks to good cooperation with the Centre for Social Work, the family of Minka realised right on free health insurance and started receiving the regular social assistance. Work with this family was eventually successful, as Minka does not go to the cross-roads and streets anymore, she is clean and tidy, and she likes come to the Telex Centre still. Recently, Minka entered the dance section and she also comes for assistance in homework. Her mother is now very proud of Minka, as she reads her newspaper and doctor's prescriptions. Father still drinks but he is very often out of home, what means fewer problems in their small house. Minka looks happy and proud, and she still calls the Telex Centre: „my real school“.



Minka in 1999, when found at the streets of Tuzla



Minka today, at regular school