

SCRIPT OF THE RADIO - DOCUMENTARY TITLED "ONE WEEK IN IDOMENI"

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AUTHOR: JERKO BAKOTIN

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voices, atmosphere noise

Author: We are at the railway station of Idomeni, from which trains are no more going towards Europe, through Macedonia and onwards to the North... Towards Serbia, Hungary, Croatia, Austria, and on - towards the country which name is here pronounced only by holding breath - but also with a hope - "Almānyā, 'Almānyā", that is to say, Germany.

JERKO BAKOTIN: ONE WEEK IN IDOMENI

(In Croatian: "Jedan tjedan u Idomeniju")

voices, noise, vehicles, music in the background

01:57 **Author:** You are coming from Afrin?

Man: Yes.

Author: How many days are you already on the journey?

Man: Around twenty days. We came by the boat to Greece from Istanbul.

(Converses with his companions)

Man: We are Kurds, we do not like Arabs. We want to go together, just Kurds.

Author: You are a family?

Man: No, but everyone is from Afrin.

Author: What will happen with you now since the border is closed?

Man: I do not know, but we think Mama... (not completely clear, loughs) We love Mama Merkel. We wait here. We love Europe.

(Voices of his companions)

Author: What is your name?

Man: Şêro.

Author: How old are you?

Man: Lion.

Author: No, how many years do you have?

Man: Eighteen.

(Converses with the companions)

Man: They are singers. Everybody here is singer.

Author: You were musicians in Afrin?

Man: Yes, kurdish music.

Author: How did you pass from Turkey to Greece? You had to pay?

Man: Yes, seven hundred dollars per person.

Author: For the boat to Lesbos?

Man: Yes. (Companion's voices). We do not love Turkey. Not good. Turkey takes money from Europe, and nothing is happening.

Author: Thank you. Could you repeat your name please?

Man: Şêro. It means lion.

Author: Thank you. Good luck!

Man: Thank you. Good luck for you!

04:43 **Faysal:** My name is Faysal al-Mahimid. I came here to help my mother. I think I can help my mother, but I came here and I see it is another situation. I live in Germany and my mother here. I was searching for four days, but I do not have much time. I have been in many camps, cities in Greece. But - nothing...

Author: How old are you?

Faysal: I am twenty years old.

Author: It is here just your mother or?

Faysal: My mother with my two sisters and one brother. My father and me are in Germany.

Author: You left Syria because of the war?

Faysal: Yes, I left Syria in 2012. First Turkey then Greece. In 2015 I am in Germany.

Author: How did you come from Turkey to Germany?

Faysal: It is a big story. Not like this people here. I payed so much money... Like ten thousand euro. With fake passport, through one country in Asia - Sri Lanka, with one policeman to help me to go inside the plane... It is easy, but nobody has so much money to go in this way. You fly from Turkey to Sri Lanka with Syrian passport, then from Sri Lanka to Frankfurt, Germany with one fake passport, Romanian passport.

Author: What are you working in Germany?

Faysal: I work in IT systems. Technician for computers... And I do not have any chance, to think about if I can help my mother... The people here and the Greece, police, made some camps, tents... But it is not a good place for people to stay here because it is cold... Not so much food for all the people here.

Author's colleague: You said before that you are sometimes ashamed because you are living in Germany?

Faysal: Yes I go ashamed. When I say to the people I am living in Germany and I am here. I do not need any paper from any country in this world, if I do not stay with my mother.

female voices, vehicle noise, baby crying

Journalist: They need a doctor but they cannot explain... The pharmacist cannot give something, it is not for the young...

door sliding, scene ending

08:03

Author: We are in the restaurant in the village of Evzoni, not far from Idomeni, where many journalist teams are coming to have lunch and some rest from the tiring coverage of refugee crisis. However, it is necessary to say that our situation is completely luxurious in comparison with the unfortunate people in Idomeni camp.

Stelios: No to more measures...

Male voice: ...he got 62 percent...

Author: ...At the referendum.

Stelios: 62 percent of the people said "no" at the referendum. And Tsipras said - "yes" (laughs).

Author's colleague: And what do the people in Greece today think about Tsipras? Is he popular like before, or?

Stelios: Among old minds...But all the people who voted him - I do not think they will vote for him again.

Author: How are Tsipras' and Syriza's policies towards the refugees?

Stelios: They are trying to help them. They are friendly. But there are, also in the government, right wing minds.

Author: Is the right spreading hate against the refugees? I mean right-wing in Greece?

Stelios: Always... All the time they are doing this. They use the refugees to spread the hate... They say refugees will steal our jobs, steal our families... Rape... All lies, of course.

Author's colleague: And the younger generations, are they right or left?

Stelios: They are nowhere, and that is the problem. They do not have any political opinion, the most of them.

Author: And what do you think, what will happen with these refugees?

Stelios: They will stay here, in Greece. The borders will not open.

Author: Will they be able to integrate themselves in the society?

Stelios: They will. As the refugees has always integrated in any country. I think so.

Author: Can you just say your name and how old are you?

Stelios: Well I am Stelios, my name is Stelios. I am thirty four years old. I have never voted in Greece, just once, last year for Tsipras, because I wanted to have them to have the power alone. But he did not.

Author: And you come from Athens?

Stelios: I come from Athens.

Author: Thank you.

11:03 female voices, atmosphere noise, author trying to converse with an older man

Author: What happened? (....) I do not understand.

Child: They see... We go and tell them there is a fight, come and help us, but they said you go fight, I do not want problem with your fight.

Author: And you do not know why there was a fight?

Child: No. Because they do not... say for us.

Author: And how long did the fight last?

Child: I think for... Ten days.

Author: And how long is your family already here?

Child: We are in this camp for... Eighteen days.

Author: And where were you before?

Child: Before we were in another camp... I forgot where was it.

Author: But it was in Greece or in Turkey?

Child: In Greece.

Author: You said you are from Kabul?

Child: Yes. I came from Kabul to Iran. And I came through mountains from Iran to Turkey, and then with the boat to Greece

Author: And how old are you?

Child: Eleven.

Author: What is your name?

Child: Emran.

Author: Nice to meet you.

(Author's colleagues pronouncing the names of the kids)

Syrian? No, Afghani... The Kabul gang?

13:40 atmosphere, boy is shouting, selling cigarettes and sim-cards

Author: These are the cigarettes and sim-cards vendors. (Conversation about wi-fi availability). Why do you want to go to Germany?

Zar: My family in Germany. My two brothers in Germany, my sister in Germany. I can go to Germany.

Author: Where in Germany?

Zar: Very Yazidi people in Germany. Very very Yezidi people. Iraq - terrorists, everyone anti-Yazidi.

Author: You are from Sinjar?

Zar: I am from Sinjar.

Author: And how old are you?

Zar: I am fifteen... We traveled thirteen days... First to Istanbul, going to Antalya, in Antalya water... We paid two thousand and one hundred euro.

Stelios: How many people are you?

Zar: Thirty, thirty one.

Stelios: And everyone payed twenty-one hundred?

Zar: Family, all family... Baby no.

Stelios: You went to Mitilini, Leros, Lesbos, where?

Zar: The name I do not know... We were twenty four hours at the sea, then we came to Athens. From Athens to here, in bus. One people - fifty euro.

Author: What is your name?

Zar: Zar.

Author: How will you continue?

Zar: One minute, friend... Danger, no danger... I do not know... In car, big car... to Albania. Then Italy, going to Germany.

Stelios: It is dangerous.

Zar: Danger... No danger. Here no good. Look around, this water. Is this my room? Is this good? (laughs)

mocks his sister

17:08 music through the loudspeakers

Author: People are waiting in line for their daily meals. This is Idomeni camp, Saturday, 19th of March, 2016.

helicopter passing over

Author: Helicopters are flying over the camp, the line has several hundred people standing, waiting for hours.... The police, the railway line which is no more carrying tens and hundreds of thousands of refugees towards the Europe.

18:36

little girl is trying to teach the Author to count to ten in Arabic

Author: It is hard. (*wants to teach her in English, but she insists for him to learn in Arabic*). Arabic? Arabic is hard (laughs).

converses with the girls.

teaches them to count to ten in Croatian.

Author: Jedan, dva, tri, četiri, pet...

20:34

Author: Can you tell me how long are you already on the way and how have you came from Damascus to Greece?

Yusuf: I guess... The journey from Turkey to here lasted maybe one month. I came from Damascus... I had to leave because of the Syrian Army, but I could legally be in Turkey just limited time. Then I had to leave. So I managed to find some smugglers to take me to Greece, and go immigrate, as a refugee. I tried three times from Turkey to Greece. Yeah, I failed first two

times. The first time, it was not my fault, but smugglers fault. They are really stupid. They just care for money. And the third time I succeeded. We suffered a lot. It happened like... Because we stayed in fishing boat for fourteen hours... They said a jet boat (laughs). But it was just a fishing boat. From 9:30 PM to 7 PM we were waiting in the cold for the Turkish coast guard to leave. And they forgot the gas and lot of stuff, so we just stayed there. From there we passed to Samos, there is center for the documents... From Samos to Athens one week, then from Athens I came to Idomeni.

Author: How did you come from Damascus to Turkey and why did you have to leave Damascus?

Yusuf: Yes I told you, the Syrian Army... Lately they took lot of guys... From nineteen to forty-one, forty-two, I do not know. And the rule is if you are the only boy child of your family, you can stay. They are not going to take you. But I suffered a lot at the checking points, every time they say "You do not want to fight for your country". I said - "No, I am studying". And the third time they took me. After three days my father had to pay some money to take me out of there.

Author: You were in prison?

Yusuf: Yeah.

Author: How does it look like to be in prison in Syria?

Yusuf: It was really horrible. Seriously horrible. I met some guys trying to escape. They had bullets in their feet. And they are in the prison. And some guys police claimed they are from Isis, although I am not sure in that. And just the smell of the cell was horrible, smell of all the the blood... Made me want to kill myself. Seriously. I could not resist it.

Author: So up to very recently you were living in Damascus. How is the situation in Damascus right now?

Yusuf: I guess... Macedonians say that Damascus is a safe city, but it is not. Look, the center of the city is the safest place in Syria, in my opinion. But that does not money it is safe, like safe. You know what I mean?... Yeah, a lot of bombing every day, explosions in different places, and it is all over the news. But it is safest area, safer than in Aleppo or Palmyra, those are ruined, completely ruined.

Author: How did you pass from Damascus to Turkey?

Yusuf: By an airplane.

Author: So the Damascus airport is functioning?

Yusuf: No, airport in Damascus is closed. Planes are flying from Lebanon, from Beirut.

Author: And how much money do the people usually pay to the smugglers to take them to Greece?

Yusuf: It is different. Smugglers are functioning in chain. So this Arabic guy - maybe Syrian, maybe from Iraq - lot of them are from Iraq - knows some guy, this guy knows some guy... And on and on to the big heads. And the big heads, most of them - like ninety percent - are Turkish, you know. The bigger the chain, the bigger the money you are going to pay. Because everyone wants to have his benefits, you know, his money. So everything is from case to case. I paid thousand five hundred dollar for a fishing boat. And it can flip off easily.

Author: How long were you in Turkey?

Yusuf: In Turkey, I stayed there for... about a month.

Author: Where did you stay?

Yusuf: I searched for a hostel through the Internet. And the friend helped me. I payed for a week and then the receptionist became my friend... And I wanted to go to some cheaper place, I was in İstiklal street, but the guys from the hostel did not let me. They said you have to stay here. We do not want you to go. Just stay here, for free. We had fun, I was playing guitar.

Author: What kind of music do you play?

Yusuf: Generally blues, rock, and kind of fusion.

Author: And you took your guitar with you?

Yusuf: Yeah.

Author: Are you disappointed with the Europe's decision to close the borders?

Yusuf: Actually I... I am disappointed already two weeks ago. I knew that is going to happen. But... I managed to live with it. Since I started this journey, many disappointments happen. And you get used to it.

Author: But the conditions in this camp are really horrible.

Yusuf: Yeah. The first day when I came here I wanted to kill myself seriously. One German guy told me not to do it, everything will be fine. He calmed me down and we became friends. His name is Felix.

Author: Thank you.

Yusuf: Don't worry.

28:33

Author: The wood is being cut... With a blade which is being hit with a stone.

Male voice: Nowruz, Nowruz...

Author: Kurds are celebrating Newroz, the Kurdish New Year, a holiday which in Turkey has acquired a lot of political connotations, it is celebrated on 21th of March, also in some other Middle Eastern countries like Iran. It probably has roots in Zoroastrianism... A group of maybe one or two thousand Kurds, many Kurdish flags, flags of Syrian Kurdistan, flags of YPG - "People's Protection Units" - military of Kurds from Syrian Kurdistan, or Rojava as they call that area... Bright colors, red stars over yellow background... Syrian Kurds are mostly organized by the PYD party which is close to the PKK party.... There is an improvised stage with a lot of Kurdish and one Greek flag... In front of it there is a big fire... I am entering the circle...

lot of voices in Kurdish

Author: What does the Newroz mean for Kurdish people?

Zar: This is Newroz for Kurdish people, good. This is Newroz in border Macedonia.

Author: What is Newroz?

Zar: Newroz in Kurdish... all people Kurdistan! The people from Iraq, from Syria, from Iran, from Turkey... The people Kurdistan.

Author: It is like holiday?

Zar: Newroz in twenty-one... I do not know the name in English. Newroz in twenty-one *Adar* (March in Arabic).

Author: Thank you!

32:44

Author: Idomeni camp at night. People are sitting in front of the tents... Singing. The children are crying. (...) Also at the other end of the camp Kurds are celebrating Newroz, we are approaching one column of people.

music

Author: The sound of electric guitar.

35:04

Author: This is Idomeni refugee camp, 21st of March 2016.

Voiceover: People are chanting “No water, no food”

Author: People are sitting on the railway line. The Greek government intends to relocate this people to the more comfortable refugee camps, but they still want to go over the border, through Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and onwards to the European Union countries - in fact, to Germany.

Author: They are shouting: “Open the borders”.

people protesting

Author: People are exhausted and revolted, they are waiting for weeks in mud, almost everyone is coughing, they are sick, tired, wet and hungry.

Yusuf: Do you want to know what they are saying? They are saying: “Be loud, we prefer to die, it is better than this situation”.

Voiceover: (*Translates to Croatian what Yusuf just said*). Save us Germany, do not forget us.

Author: Because of the Newroz there are many Kurdish flags all over the camp, what of course shows that a great number of the Kurds is among the refugees. Red-white-green flags with sun in the middle, and the tricolors of the Syrian Kurds...

Author: Around the tents they have dug the drainage channels... Last couple of days it is sunny, but the previous week was very wet with heavy rains. Because of that the whole camp turned into a muddy quagmire. A bit about choreography: This is complete chaos, among it seven or eight big white tents which have been set up by the Doctors without borders. Maybe one hundred people can fit into one tent. And these are surrounded by the sea of the small tents of different colors, thrown all around this mud, in front of them are improvised cloth driers. Every

little piece of wood is very precious here, the pieces of clothes are thrown around as well as the luggage which is not needed any more... Of course, lot of garbage. But anything what can be used is used in this everyday's battle for survival. One doctor stated for the newspapers that back home in his country he would keep at least half of this people in hospital. Here he can not do more than to give them a couple of pills and send them back to their muddy tents.

In short, this is a giant hubbub, constantly is someone searching for a doctor, constantly are people waiting for the food, children are honking with plastic horns, cigarette and sim card vendors are shouting, there is an improvised hair salon on the open. Of course the life goes on, even here. The children are playing, the refugees are protesting, hundreds of foreign journalists are here, almost as on some kind of limitless safari, and this is a self-service for journalists, especially for photographers and camera operators, to whom a limitless amount of exotic scenes is being offered. These people have almost no privacy at all, they are being exposed to the cameras...

We hear slogans being chanted, seems there is a protest going on again. Our friend said that these protests are not the right answer and they do not lead to the solution for these people, however, anyone who visited Idomeni and saw this catastrophe and breathed this smell, cannot but have understanding for them.

Children's chanting:

Mama Merkel! Mama Merkel!

(shouting in Arabic, something like "All people have to pass to Germany")

42:50

Author: Tuesday, 22nd of March 2016. The refugees are still protesting near the railway line, sitting on it. Several hundreds people... As we hear, they are on hunger strike.

people shouting and chanting

Author: Mr. Baloch, I am doing a reportage for the Croatian Radio. Could you say in a couple of sentences what is going on here and why are the people protesting?

Babar Baloch, UNHCR spokesperson: At this site we have around twelve thousand people, people from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraqis, most of them are women and children, we talk about at least four thousand children here. They are in a very difficult situation. The border is closed for

around eight or nine days. They can't move forward and they can't go back to where they come from. So there is a lot of anxiety, uncertainty, and they are running out of patience as well.

Author: That is why they are protesting?

Baloch: I think every day, they are trying to make a point. I was reading some of the signs they were holding. They are sending a message that they are refugees and not migrants. This is an exhibit of misery, whenever you walk. It is very important that they be moved to the proper camps and that they are being taken care of... To advise them what possibilities they have, because now they have hit a wall and there is no way forward.

Author's colleague: Can you tell us something about their health condition?

Baloch: We are seeing that there are more and more issues and challenges with health, especially health of children. Conditions are very unhygienic. This is not a proper camp site. People are camping all around, also during the night they burn all kinds of stuff to warm themselves...All of these things are quite worrying for us. The doctors are telling us that the number of sick children is increasing, there are problems with respiratory system, bloody diarrheas, gastroenterological problems, pneumonias... You name it and they have it. So this is a humanitarian emergency, and it seems it could become a medical emergency as well.

45:58

Author: There could be some trouble here. Police autobus came and it seems that police intends to pass with the bus through the crowd to disperse it from the railway line.

Author: Are the people here on the hunger strike?

Ammar: Yes. They forcefully closed the cantine. Not just this one, the other one as well. No one can come here, they have cut the way for any food truck. Even the police can not come.

Author: Where are you from?

Ammar: From Syria, Damascus.

Author: And your name?

Ammar: Ammar.

The voice through the loudspeaker: We will stay here. If you wanna shoot, you can shoot. We don't go, we stay here.

Ammar: People are furious.

Author: How long are you here?

Ammar: Twenty-five days.

Author: The refugees are holding signs “We are sorry for Brussels” - today there were terrorist attacks in Brussels. Then - “Europe - you have betrayed us”, “Merkel - you betrayed us”, “We hate ISIS”, “We are not migrants, we are refugees”, “All of us have right to pass”... “Animals have more rights than us” - a small girl is holding a cardboard with that sign. Police bus is still here, in front of several hundred of refugees...

Author: You said that the two men want to self-immolate themselves?

Ammar: Actually yesterday one tried to do that by pouring some gasoline on him, but the guys stopped him, and today he swore with everything God has created that he is going to burn himself. The leader and the other guy are relatives, they said they will burn themselves today if the borders does not open.

Author: And they are here?

Ammar: Yes, the guy wearing red, and his relative is someone here... Everyone filming.

Author: The people are waiting for this to happen?

Ammar: Yes.

Author’s colleague: This is madness...

Author: Is that the guy - in the red?

Ammar: Yes.

Author: The man has set himself on fire! The man has set himself of fire! The crowd is running, the man is running while burning!...

Ammar: I told you.

Author: This is complete chaos, he poured gasoline over himself and set himself on fire, there is smell of gasoline in the air... They tried to extinguish the fire... He ran somewhere, the big group of people is following him... You could clearly see how the man turned in a torchlight for a moment...

A scene... Completely obscene and inhuman. The man pours gasoline over himself because he cannot enter Europe... In the past times, the times in which Jan Palach committed self immolation, they were being thought that this is being done only in totalitarian regimes. But here we can see that Europe is building walls and in front of European walls the people commit self-immolation.

The crowd is still here... They are carrying one man... What shit is this... The faces, carrying pieces of wood, exhausted, hungry, now also burned, angry, in the protest, raising their fists towards the sky, raising their children towards the sky like icons, their hungry children...

52:56

Voiceover:

This was radio-documentary "One week in Idomeni" by author Jerko Bakotin, recorded in the refugee camp in Idomeni, Greece, between 19th and 24th of March 2016.

53:15

Author: Idomeni, Thursday, 24th of March 2016. This is very windy day. Three men are praying on the cold concrete ground... Turned towards the Mecca. All around the wind is destroying and carrying tents, making noise. On the railway station there are tents everywhere - over the lines, on the platform, absolutely everywhere. There is a sign in several languages - including Serbian - "Camping allowed only in designated areas". The children are playing between the rails, wind is carrying their toys, destroying tents... There is one abandoned cradle near by... And loads of garbage.

Then, the wire which divides Idomeni from Gevgelija - Hellenic Republic, Greece, from Macedonia. Razor wire fence, then three to four meters fence, on the top of it barbed wire. Between the corridor, then again razor wire, again fence with barbed wire... On the wire - a lot of clothes are hanging... Near the railway, a concrete column with a sign "Position 59", on the one side "Greece", on the other "SFRY" (Yugoslavia).

Hazy sunlight is breaking through the clouds... In the distance there is a football game being played, then the camp with Kurdish flags... Protest still going on... How many lives were stopped on this wire? How many burned, expelled lives?...

One can hear the birds' song... And see the field full of tents.... The shields of the Greek police... Muddy lake, by which one Yazidi family from Sinjar is sitting... Then generators...

We are leaving Idomeni for today. A said departure. These people are being thrown back to the neolithic conditions. Fire is only they have to warm themselves and to cook on... There is rain expected next days... What means that their living conditions - miserable anyway - will become worse.

Their suffering is, however, very sought-after media material... And I am not exempt from that.

Voiceover:

author: Jerko Bakotin/ sound editing: Luka Pavelić and Miroslav Šeb/ editor: Ljubica Letinić.