

Haskovo in Bulgaria – 2nd visit on April, 30th, 2009

What other crimes are human beings able to commit...?

What causes human beings in the year of 2009 to commit such offenses on helpless weak creatures within a “united, new and modern Europe”...?

How can a human being argue to justify the killing of defenceless dogs in an – even for wicked people – extremely bestial way...?

What is the true value of laws and regulations being officially undersigned by the new members of the European Union – especially Bulgaria – which seem not worth the paper they are written upon ...?

Is it possible that in the year of 2009 crime against animals is sanctioned knowingly by highest authorities and officials – if not even ordered – despite prohibition by law ... and being totally ignored and hushed up by the local justice and police – probably by order from above ...?

Are there truly enormous amounts of sponsoring money for animal welfare purposes transferred from the EU to exactly those authorities in exactly this country Bulgaria...?

If so – where does the money go to...?

But all these questions which take automatically and irrevocably any sleep from us during our days in Bulgaria are nothing against the last question burned into our heads or in other words it is a sad idea which has suggested itself and drummed into our minds:

Has mankind in Europe learned nothing from Holocaust, the pain and fear of Nazi-time, the horrible crime of concentration camps and extermination of Jews? Has the hatred now only been transferred to animals?

Following now the actual report in all its horrible details:

On Thursday, 30th of April 2009 we decide to leave the 6th neutering project in Kazanlak (also in Bulgaria) for a short visit and to check if the isolator at the zoo of Haskovo is really not used anymore. We have received according information from people in and around Haskovo.

Reaching the parking lot we see a little dog going from park pew to park pew begging for food. But here the locals have no heart ... So we try to get to dog to come to us but he is disappointed and runs away hungrily.

The closer we get to the zoo the more tense we get.

Directly at the entrance we see a sign meaning “dogs forbidden” and realise a rusty big container with numerous black plastic bags, we get a ticklish feeling.

Okay, lets check the isolator first ...

Our hearts beat faster as we are getting closer. But already from afar we can see the doors open wide – at least the back doors. A strange feeling, total silence. But still the smell of death and the everlasting suffering of the animals who have died in this place so far. The grass in front of the cages has become high but could not cover the terrible cages.

The floor and the walls are still covered with blood, excrements and animal fur. A place of horror. We feel petrified and cannot do anything but cry bitterly.

But thanks god there is no more living animal anymore! Around the isolator you can still see the bones and fur which slowly putrefy here.

On some trees you can still find the collar of a dog. Did he once have an owner?

The guards (one we still know from our last visit) follow us and address us. Immediately we realise the bloody shoes of one of them and we ask where the blood comes from. No reply. He tells us that he remembers us and that he knows that the surviving dogs from February have been brought to Australia!!! and Germany. We now ask where the surviving bear is living presently.

At this moment a couple arrives, a German and a born Bulgarian lady living now in Germany. So now we have a translator which makes communication a lot easier. We now look after the pen of the bear – still desolate. We were promised by the organisation “4 paws” to take care of the bear and eventually bring him to the bear park in Belitsa. The poor brown bear goes from left to right and back in his little iron cage, on the floor a few slices of bread and a lot of excrements.

Suddenly a cry, two of our group have discovered the little dog we saw before. In the background we hear dogs barking and howling. We run in this direction and cross the lions cage. Also these 3 beasts run a sad life. As the guards follow us the lions roar aggressively in their direction, probably they are tortured by them. The little dog can be caught now but cries desperately. Behind the cages of the apes we hear loud dog cries. Now we want to know from the guards what is going on there.

In front of the building rusty cages, blood and fur from dogs. Besides another container, intestines, whole guts, pools of blood.

Behind all that a stock of straw, filled and half emptied bottles of T 61 – a medication used for euthanasia, a slow and extremely painful suffocation (this poison in the closed neighbourhood of the childrens playground!). And again cages with blood and dog fur. And ropes for strangulation, collars besides shovels. O my god, how many poor creatures have died here in so cruel ways? We have a terrible feeling and the still living dogs inside the building whimper.

The guards discuss whether they can wrench our cameras from us but then get their boss, the director of the zoo and “veterinarian” Dr. Yassen Stankov, which we have already learned to know as a terrible tormentor of animals and responsible for the happening at the isolator. He arrives and accuses us to have broken a glass shield which we definitely had not done.

We know ask for the presence of the police as they would not show us why the dogs are whimpering and crying so desperately. We can only glimpse through a chink. The dogs look at us imploring for help ...

Two policemen arrive but cannot help as there is no key to open up and the dogs are property of the zoo. We now have to join them to the police station, at least the male members of our group. The dogs in the apes building whimper and cry without break, they hear our voices outside and implore for help.

The beasts cage is just beside the apes building ... we assume that the smaller dogs are to be fed to the beasts.

We decide to bring the little dog to our car where he is in safety. On our way out we decide to open one of these strange black plastic bags. Touching the first WARM bag we get a terrible feeling ...

We cut up the bag and look at a black fur, a dead dog! The second bag is also still warm, a further dead dog. Our veterinarian Svetlana confirms that the dogs have only been dead for a few hours. The cord he has been strangled with is still around his neck. The guard with the bloody shoes is standing behind us and grins.

Svetlana says that we have to open up all bags and line up all the dead dogs besides the container. These terrible deaths have to be seen – also by the other visitors of the zoo.

Numerous people stop, are speechless and shocked. So many dead dogs! And once again in the close neighbourhood of the playground.

What have these poor creatures done wrong? Puppies of less than a day of age are in the bags. It is hell, we lay all dead dog bodies in line, the puppies, the mother dogs – all of them. Their paralysed faces express that they gave up long before they were killed and they just lay as if they would only sleep.

It is simply incredible what happens here again and again – not in the isolator anymore, but a few hundred meters apart.

Did they think we are that stupid? Not to check what we discovered in February? Probably the killing in and around the apes building already found place in February but we did not have this little dog than who led us there showing up the horrible massacres – like “Lucky” – another survivor of the animals hell of Haskovo, part of the EU!!!

In the meantime the press we called shows up. They make lots of photos and interviews. All dead dog bodies from the bags (45!!! only from this one container) lay out on the ground. For hours we discuss the massacre with guards, policemen and people walking by.

We fight until midnight, we are x-times asked by the police to leave the zoo. We stay – to get the still living dogs out of the apes building. Nobody helps us here! Not even the police – a dog’s life means nothing to them. In the meantime we hear that with every stray dog brought here you can earn one Leva (= 0,50 €!).

Pure bureaucracy, we negotiate for hours – suddenly a white VW Sharan stops and gets the key of the apes building. We follow, make pictures. The man comes out with 2 puppies and stores them in his car. We beg to get the other dogs out – no chance. The man and the two women joining get away. Again nobody to help us. The informed organisation “4 Paws” has again no time this day to come and help us.

We cannot achieve anything in this night anymore. Even our offers to pay for the dogs are not accepted. We leave but promise to come back the very next day.

Next morning, Friday, the 1st of May, we want to return to Haskovo to finally make an official report at the police station.

The previous day the police chief in charge managed to avoid our official report by fooling us all the time.

First they let us explain... commenting our explanations with surprised and unbelieving looks, then they told us that they have to inform higher authorities who then will decide whether the police is allowed to investigate?!

We probably would still be waiting for the promised recall ... as waiting seems to be the motto of the police in Haskovo...!

At about 21.30 our two men decide to leave the police station and support us at the zoo again...!

As we realize now there has obviously been a “decision” in the meantime... of course we were not informed and this decision is clearly against us, against the existing applicable laws and in favour of the crime going on, as in the time the two men and the translator have been kept busy at the police station a group of about 6 policemen additionally came to the zoo to prevent us from saving the dogs and to put pressure on us!

Today, Friday, we will follow another strategy!

Along with our Bulgarian translator and our veterinarian Svetlana we compose a complete report of all facts, written in Bulgarian, which we want to pass over to the police against the discovered crime towards the dogs!

We are lucky!

The police chief in duty seems to take our report serious... there is still some paper work to do but about 22.00 we have finished everything and our report has got an "official" file number.

Another official report about the behaviour of the police will be placed by us at another authority (Ministry of Interior) a few days later stating that the police has refused to punish the tormentors and in the opposition have protected them knowing what was going on there!

What followed in Bulgaria were medial indignation, internet-discussion-fores dealing with the horror of Haskovo, reports with pictures in the local newspapers, a TV-interview during which the accused mayor lost his nerves.. and states that he will terminate the employment of the director of the zoo (sacrificing the weakest...)

We hope – like always – for a better future, but that cannot make the dead of those 45 dogs undone...!

Every time we cry millions of tears in our hearts for every single dog which was or is killed in a mean and cruel way in this member country of the EU but we smile about every single cat and dog WE could save through our presence and activities ...!

HASKOVO ... we will be back...!!!

The team of Tierhilfe Süden Austria would like to thank EVERY reader taking consequences out of this report...!

Thank you so much!

Tierhilfe Süden Austria, May 2009