A CIRCLE OF SUPPORT:
The Life and Work of
Ludmila Popovici of Moldova

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2012 Women PeaceMakers Program

University of San Diego®
JOAN B. KROC
SCHOOL OF PEACE STUDIES
Institute for Peace and Justice

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A NOTE TO THE READER

In the following pages, you will find narrative stories about a Woman PeaceMaker, along with additional information to provide a deep understanding of a contemporary conflict and one person's journey within it. These complementary components include a brief biography of the peacemaker, a historical summary of the conflict, a timeline integrating political developments in the country with personal history of the peacemaker, a question-and-answer transcript of select interviews, and a table of best practices in peacebuilding as demonstrated and reflected on by the peacemaker during her time at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice.

The document is not intended necessarily to be read straight through, from beginning to end. Instead, you can use the historical summary or timeline as mere references or guides as you read the narrative stories. You can move straight to the table of best practices if you are interested in peacebuilding methods and techniques, or go to the question-and-answer transcript if you want to read commentary in the peacemakers' own words. The goal of this format is to reach audiences through multiple channels, providing access to the peacemakers' work, vision, lives and impact in their communities.

ABOUT THE WOMEN PEACEMAKERS PROGRAM

The Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice's (IPJ) Women PeaceMakers Program annually hosts four women from around the world who have been involved in human rights and peacemaking efforts in their countries.

Women on the frontline of efforts to end violence and secure a just peace seldom record their experiences, activities and insights — as generally there is no time or, perhaps, they do not have formal education that would help them record their stories. The Women PeaceMakers Program is a selective program for leaders who want to document, share and build upon their unique peacemaking stories. Selected peacemakers join the IPJ for an eight-week residency.

Women PeaceMakers are paired with a Peace Writer to document in written form their story of living in conflict and building peace in their communities and nations. While in residence at the institute, Women PeaceMakers give presentations on their work and the situation in their home countries to the university and San Diego communities.

The IPJ believes that women's stories go beyond headlines to capture the nuance of complex situations and expose the realities of gender-based violence, thus providing an understanding of conflict and an avenue to its transformation. The narrative stories of Women PeaceMakers not only provide this understanding, but also show the myriad ways women construct peace in the midst of and after violence and war. For the realization of peace with justice, the voices of women — those severely affected by violent conflict and struggling courageously and creatively to build community from the devastation — must be recorded, disseminated and spotlighted.[1]

BIOGRAPHY OF A WOMAN PEACEMAKER – LUDMILA POPOVICI

Ludmila Popovici is the founder of the Rehabilitation Center of Torture Victims Memoria, or RCTV Memoria, the only such organization in Moldova working with survivors of torture and one of the first nonprofit, nongovernmental organizations in the country. Over the last decade, RCTV Memoria has treated more than 1,300 survivors of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

In the late 1990s, Popovici was training to become a medical doctor and working at the Nicolae Testemitanu State Medical and Pharmaceutical University in Moldova when she first became involved with the treatment of torture victims. She learned of centers in neighboring Romania that rehabilitated people who had been tortured under the regime of Nicolae Ceausescu. In Moldova there were a large number of people who suffered torture under the Soviets before the end of the Cold War. Popovici made parallels between her field of medicine and the epidemic of torture: "I understood that my destiny was to teach others the epidemiology of torture. My vocation became helping people and finding efficient vaccines to prevent this dangerous phenomenon for my society."

She founded RCTV Memoria in 1999 to provide mental health rehabilitation services through medical, psychological and legal assistance to victims of torture. When the communist party came back to power in Moldova in 2001, the beneficiaries of RCTV Memoria expanded beyond former political prisoners under the Soviets to include victims of police violence and torture. The organization's services were also offered to refugees and asylum seekers from around the world.

Popovici's vocal advocacy for survivors of torture and her lobbying to criminalize torture in national legislation was incredibly dangerous at a time of heightened repression under the communist regime. On one occasion she was interrogated, accused of defaming the state. But instead of being punished and perhaps tortured herself, she convinced the police of the positive role that her and RCTV Memoria's activities had on society. "I explained that by helping victims, we contribute to reducing revenge, and in this way we can diminish confrontation in society" between the police and communities. She was released on the condition that she would organize a seminar for the police on the prevention of torture.

Popovici is called upon as an expert on torture and treatment of its victims at national and international levels. RCTV Memoria also goes beyond direct services. In 2005, it released a book and documentary called *Shattered Destinies*, chronicling the stories of 14 women victims of political repression during the Stalinist period. Popovici plans to expand this type of work by the organization, so that it will become not just a rehabilitation center, but also a major resource and reference center on trauma.

CONFLICT HISTORY — MOLDOVA

Moldova, a small, landlocked country with roughly 4 million inhabitants, is situated between Romania and Ukraine. The Dneister River runs from Moldova's northern tip past its southern border, dividing the larger, western part of the country from the small, eastern, Transnistrian region. Moldova has an ample amount of fertile farmland and a temperate climate but remains one of the poorest countries in Europe, with an economy largely based on fruit, vegetables, wine, and tobacco farming and production, as well as income sent to Moldovan families by relatives who work outside the country.

Separated from Turkey by the Black Sea and a small section of Ukraine, Moldova lies close to the border between Asia and Europe, giving it a history of constant invasion by Roman, pagan, Christian and Islamic empires. From 1538 to 1812, the Moldovan people lived under Ottoman rule in territory known as Bessarabia. Conquered by the Russian Empire in 1812, they became inhabitants of Moldavia, a Russian province. By mid-century, Bessarabia and parts of Ukraine were joined, and a section of Moldavia's western territory became Romania. The Tsarist government also encouraged other displaced populations within the empire to settle in Moldavia, and chose Russian as the province's official language.

After World War I, Bessarabia was incorporated into Romania, while a smaller area, made up of Transnistrian and Ukrainian territories, became the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (M.A.S.S.R.), part of the U.S.S.R.

In 1939, when Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Bessarabia was awarded to the U.S.S.R., which added the region to the M.A.S.S.R., creating a satellite republic known as the Moldavian S.S.R.

Drought, lack of economic support from the Soviet government and political unrest characterized the Moldavian S.S.R. after World War II. Under Stalin, political unrest was controlled through mass deportations, arrests, torture, executions and exile to forced labor camps administered by the Soviet GULag agency.[2] Although the majority of people in the republic were of Romanian decent and spoke a version of Moldovan that was nearly identical to Romanian, the Soviet government designated a Russian-Moldovan dialect written in Cyrillic as the republic's official language. The Russification of the language was an attempt to separate Moldavians from Romania as much as possible.

After Stalin, Soviet leaders continued to deal with political unrest by arresting individual leaders of independence movements from different sectors of the Moldavian S.S.R. and sentencing them to long prison terms.

Greater Soviet openness in the 1980s led to the birth of new independence movements in the republic. Russian-speaking Transnistrians, Turkish-speaking Gagauzians, and the largest group,

the Moldovan/Romanian-speaking Popular Front of Moldova, all demanded autonomy. The Popular Front of Moldova organized a series of demonstrations against the Communist leadership, leading to significant changes in the republic: The official language switched to Moldovan with the Latin alphabet, and the first democratic parliamentary elections were held.

In 1991, after the break-up of the Soviet Union, the republic was renamed Moldova. It became part of the post-Soviet Commonwealth of Independent States and was recognized as an autonomous nation by the United Nations in 1992.

Meanwhile, Transnistrians declared the area east of the Dneister River a separate, Russian-speaking Transnistrian republic, which led to military conflict between the new Moldovan army and Transnistrians aided by forces from the former Soviet Union's 14th Army. Russia and Moldova signed a ceasefire agreement in 1992, but since then Transnistria has operated as a breakaway republic and virtual satellite of Russia. Moscow banned imports of Moldovan wine and agricultural products, doubled the price of natural gas in Moldova, and provided economic and military aid to Transnistria — and recognized its independence. The region has its own economy based on developed steel and textile industries, electricity plants used by the entire country of Moldova, organized crime, and cross-border smuggling. It maintains its own government.

The rest of Moldova has alternately allied itself with Russia and the European Union. In 1992, soon after achieving independence, the EU-friendly Moldovan government attempted to introduce a market economy. The country plunged into economic decline. The Communist party was voted into power from 2001 to 2009.

During this time, the ruling party in Moldova's parliament exerted centralized power over every branch of government. The president controlled the elections of state judges and prosecutors and used the distribution of budgets as a way to control local authorities and favor certain regions over others. High-level politicians were also involved in international business and monopolized strategic industries like banking, telecommunications, utilities and agriculture. The gap between the small minority of elites with strong political ties and the large majority of Moldovans, many of whom were unemployed and/or living in poverty, created a lack of confidence in the government. Many perceived the government to be corrupt, ineffective and unwilling to change.

On a local level, the judicial system's lack of independence led to problems in dealing with human rights abuses by members of the police department. Prosecutors who were colleagues of upper-level politicians and police officers were responsible for overseeing investigations of crimes perpetrated by the police. These close ties greatly reduced the ability of Moldovan courts to lead impartial investigations that met international human rights standards.

When the Communist party was re-elected on April 5, 2009, Moldovans held mass demonstrations based on suspicions that the elections had been rigged. On April 7, more than 10,000 people protested in Chisinau, Moldova's capital. The largely peaceful demonstration became a riot when hundreds of individuals stormed the presidential palace and parliament, ransacked both

and left the latter in flames. That evening, police began to search for suspected rioters. Within a few days, and without proof, they accumulated 600 detainees, including children. One person died of wounds from police beatings. Many of the detainees accused the police of forming "corridors" for beating, kicking and punching each prisoner as they walked by them.

The Communist party took office that May, but did not have enough of a majority to elect a new president. Three prominent opposition parties blocked the Communist candidates, forcing a new national election in July. This time, the Democratic Party gained seats, other liberal parties kept theirs, and the Communist party lost its majority. The anti-Communist parties created a coalition, the Alliance for European Integration (AEI), which gave them the majority they needed to form a new government. In September, the Communist party leader, Vladimir Voronin, resigned as the country's president, but the new AEI did not have enough of a majority to choose a replacement without votes from the Communist party. The country could not hold more than two elections in one year so the government operated under an interim president.

The new Moldovan government set up a commission to investigate the causes and consequences of April's events, and in 2010 released a report that condemned the police for indiscriminately and illegally detaining people using too much force and torturing them once they were in police custody. The commission recommended that all police involved, including superiors who gave orders and witnesses who did nothing to stop the crimes, be punished. But of the 600 or so people who were detained, only 58 cases reached Moldovan courts. Many victims were afraid to come forward, fearing further harassment, hardship, excessive financial costs and an apathetic legal system. Others sent complaints to the prosecutor general's office but were denied a trial.

In 2012, when three members of parliament defected from the Communist party, Moldova's parliament, led by the AEI, finally had the majority needed to elect a president. They chose Nicolae Timofti, who promised to maintain what he called strategic ties with the United States, Russia and Germany.

Less than a year later, Prime Minister Vlad Filat, leader of the government and a member of the Liberal Democratic Party (part of the AEI), accused the prosecutor general, an appointee of the Democratic Party (another AEI member), of involvement in the death of a Moldovan businessman, and called for his resignation. In retaliation, state prosecutors ordered investigations against government ministers appointed by Filat. The finance minister was accused of bribing a businessman, the minister of culture was alleged to have privatized a historic building in Chisinau, and the health minister was accused of using a hospital as collateral for personal bank credit.

In a move led by the Communist party, Moldova's parliament passed a vote of no confidence against Prime Minister Filat's government. If the AEI-led parliament cannot agree on a new prime minister appointed by President Nicolae Timofti, then the country will have to elect a new parliament, which may bring the Communist party back to power and shift the government's ties away from the European Union. In either case, government corruption and lack of transparency continue to create an environment conducive to human rights abuses in Moldova.

MAP — MOLDOVA


REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
REP. OF MOLDOVA
UKRAINE
ROMANIA
BLACK SEA
Briceni
Edineţ
Corbul
Soroca
Rîşcani
Floreşti
Bălţi
Vărăncjeni
Beloci
Slobodka
Kolovs'k
Ribniţa
Botoşani
Balotina
Făleşti
Sîngerea
Teleneşti
Orhei
Dubăsari
Grigoriopol
Căuşeni
Ungheni
Iaşi
Chişinău
Tiraspol
Rozdil'na
Lapuşna
Hînceşti
Tighina
Slobozia
Căuşani
Huşi
Bacău
Cimişlia
Leova
Osăneşti
Vyhoda
Basarabeasca
Comrat
Cantemir
Bilhorod Dnistrovskyy
Ceadîr-Lunga
Arbuz
Sarata
Cahul
Vulcăneşti
Bolhrad
Galaţi
National capital
Town, village
Major airport
International boundary
Main road
Railroad
0 20 40 60 km
0 20 40 mi

INTEGRATED TIMELINE

Political Developments in Moldova and *Personal History of Ludmila Popovici*

pre-1359 Moldova's territory is inhabited by Dacian tribes. It becomes part of the Roman Empire, then the Byzantine Empire, and is invaded by many different groups including Goths, Huns, Magyars and Mongols.

1359 The Principality of Moldavia is established, stretching roughly between the Carpathian Mountains and Dniester River. The area is called Moldova by the people who live there.

1538 The Principality of Moldavia becomes a tributary of the Ottoman Empire, but retains partial autonomy. The territory is known as Bessarabia.

1812 The Ottoman and Russia Empires sign the Treaty of Bucharest, ceding the eastern half of Bessarabia to Russia. The territory becomes part of a province called Moldavia. The Ottoman Empire gains control of western Moldavia.

1878 Ottomans recognize the independence of the Romanian state, including western Moldavia.

1917 The Russian Revolution topples the Russian monarchy and installs a Bolshevik government led by Vladimir Lenin.

1918 Bessarabia declares independence. Its parliament calls for union with Romania.

1920 The Treaty of Paris, signed by Allied forces after World War I, recognizes the union of Bessarabia with Romania. Bolshevik Russia and the United States do not.

1922 Formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)

1924 The Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, made up of Transnistrian and Ukrainian territories, is established.

1939 Hitler's Germany and Stalin's USSR sign the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Bessarabia is one of the areas given to the USSR.

1940 Russia annexes Bessarabia and combines it with most of the Moldovan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic to form the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (the Moldavian SSR).

1941-5 Following a Nazi attack on the USSR, a Romanian regime is installed in the Moldavian SSR. The USSR regains control of the territory shortly before the end of World War II. A Russian-Moldovan dialect written in Cyrillic becomes the republic's official language.

1944 ***Ludmila's maternal grandfather is forced to join the Soviet army in Berlin. Her mother's brother is shot by a Soviet soldier.***

1947 ***Ludmila's maternal grandfather returns to the city of Singerei.***

1949 ***Soviet soldiers force Ludmila's mother's family to give up their lands in Singerei and deport their neighbors to Siberia.***

1963 ***Ludmila is born in Singerei on December 14.***

1970 ***Ludmila begins primary school, a school with separate Russian-speaking and Romanian-speaking classes.***

1978 ***Ludmila works for the Communist Party's Kolkhoz Pioneer Camp. She goes to high school in a new Romanian-speaking school.***

1980 ***Ludmila graduates from high school.***

1980-3 ***Ludmila works as a kindergarten teacher and prepares for entrance exams to medical school in the capital of Chisinau.***

Late 1980s Mikhail Gorbachev introduces greater openness, known as *perestroika*, to the Soviet Union.

1983-9 ***Ludmila goes to Nicolae Testemitanu University of Medicine in Chisinau.***

1988 ***Ludmila marries Igor Popovici.***

1989 ***Ludmila graduates from Nicolae Testemitanu University of Medicine, with a Free Diploma that does not award job placement.***

Victor Popovici, Ludmila's son, is born.

The Popular Front of Moldova is formed. A nationalist movement, it organizes a mass demonstration in Chisinau pressing for the reinstatement of Romanian as the official language. Romanian is made the official language and the Latin script is adopted in place of the Cyrillic script.

1990 The first democratic elections are held in the Moldavian SSR. The republic declares its sovereignty. The Gagauz people in the southwest declare their independence, followed by the Transnistrian region in the east. The central power in Moldova annuls the declarations, but local elections are held anyway.

1991 Dissolution of the USSR. Moldova declares its independence and joins the Commonwealth of Independent States, the successor to the Soviet Union.

In August, Ludmila is invited to work as a general practitioner at an elementary school.

In September, Ludmila begins teaching at the Moldova State Medical and Pharmaceutical University.

1992 Moldova becomes a member of the United Nations. An upsurge in fighting in the Transnistrian region leads to a state of emergency. The Transnistrian region is aided by Russian forces and Soviet era ammunition. Hundreds die in the fighting, which is called the Moldovan-Russian War, and lasts from March 2 to July 26, when a ceasefire agreement is reached.

1994 A new constitution proclaims Moldova's neutrality, grants special autonomy status to the Transnistrian and Gagauz regions, and declares Moldovan to be the official language.

1998 ***Ludmila is invited to the Pasteur Institute in Paris to research Listeria. Her department chair forbids her to go.***

1999 ***Ludmila hears about ICAR, a center for victims of torture in Romania, which prompts her to facilitate the opening of a similar center in Chisinau, RCVT Memoria.***

In December, Memoria becomes accredited and Ludmila is named its director.

2000 ***Memoria opens in April. Its first clients are Moldovans displaced by the Soviet government under Stalin.***

2001 The Moldovan Communist party, headed by Vladimir Voronin, wins the national election. Voronin is elected president in April. Transnistrian authorities halt withdrawal of Russian arms, which had been proceeding in accordance with international agreements.

2002 ***Ludmila is called to the commissar's office for questioning about Memoria's***

activities. She persuades the commissar to allow Memoria to hold a seminar on post-traumatic stress disorder for police.

2003 ***Memoria becomes a member of the Council of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims.***

2004 ***Memoria holds a roundtable of beneficiaries so that the center's clients, called "beneficiaries," can get to know one another. The event is open to the public.***

2005 The Moldovan parliament backs a Ukrainian plan for Transnistrian autonomy within Moldova and calls on Russia to withdraw troops by the end of the year.

2006 Russian gas company Gazprom cuts off supplies to Moldova when the country refuses to pay twice the previous price. A temporary compromise is reached as talks continue.

Former Defense Minister Valery Pasat is jailed after being convicted of abuse of office on charges related to arms sales.

Transnistrian leadership reacts angrily to new regulations requiring goods entering Ukraine from Transnistria to have the Moldovan customs stamp. Moldova says the rules, backed by the European Union, United States and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, aim to stop smuggling. Russia suspends imports of Moldovan wine.

Memoria creates and implements programs for youth in detention in the prison system in Lipcani.

2006-7 ***Memoria creates and implements programs for youth in detention in the prison system in Chisinau.***

Memoria works with Vitalie Colibaba, a victim of police brutality.

2008 President Voronin and Transnistrian leader Igor Smirnov meet to restart peace talks, which broke down in 2001.

Ludmila's son graduates from high school.

2008-9 ***Memoria works with Sergiu Gurgurov, a victim of police brutality. His case is eventually tried in the European Court of Human Rights.***

2009 ***Ludmila and others protest in front of the general prosecutor's office on behalf of one of Memoria's beneficiaries, a small-businessman who was***

harassed and arrested by the police. The protesters were attacked by a group of six to seven provocateurs, who were armed with masks, teargas and spray paint.

The incumbent Communist party is declared the winner of the April elections, which are disputed. Violent protests and political deadlock ensues.

New parliamentary elections are held in July. Communists lose their majority. President Voronin resigns as speaker and is succeeded by Liberal Party leader Mihai Ghimpu.

Four pro-Western parties form a coalition government. Liberal Democratic Party leader Vlad Filat becomes prime minister. Voronin resigns as president, and is succeeded by Ghimpu on an acting basis.

Opposition Communist members of parliament refuse to back the governing coalition's candidate for president.

Following national elections, Memoria treats over 100 victims of the riots.

2010 ***Ilie Cazac, a torture victim from the breakaway republic of Transnistria, is treated by Memoria.***

The third parliamentary election in less than two years is held. The ruling pro-Western coalition wins, but again fails to secure enough seats to appoint a new president.

Marian Lupu of the Democratic Party takes over as acting president.

2011 Yevgeny Shevchuk defeats pro-Russian candidates in Transnstria's presidential election. He pledges to establish friendly relations with Moldova while continuing to press for the independence of the separatist region.

The Moldovan parliament again fails to elect a president.

Memoria becomes one of 10 international rehabilitation centers to participate in a collaborative project with the Center for Victims of Torture in St. Paul, Minn.

2012 Nicolae Timofti is elected president of Moldova.

Ludmila translates the Istanbul Protocol, international guidelines for the documentation of torture and its consequences, into Romanian.

Memoria receives funding to start new programs for youth in detention in Lipcani.

Ludmila participates in the Women PeaceMakers Program at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice in San Diego, Calif.

NARRATIVE STORIES OF THE LIFE AND WORK OF LUDMILA POPOVICI

A Secret History

"Hey, Ludmila. How are you?" a familiar voice called out.

Twelve-year-old Ludmila, rushing down the main street of Singerei, Moldova, stopped and looked up. Standing in front of the bakery was her Uncle Mischa. She ran across the street toward his round smiling face.

"Do you want some ice cream?" He pointed to the little store a few doors down.

On this hot sunny day in late May, the last day of fifth term, Ludmila would have loved a *Plombir* vanilla ice cream. But she was in a hurry. Today was the last day of auditions for music school. Her teacher thought she had a good ear and told her to go to the music school to see if she could audition. But a parent was supposed to sign up the student for the music exam and both her mother and father were still at work.

"I don't have time for ice cream, Uncle Mischa," Ludmila remarked.

Her uncle's sweet, pale face looked sad.

Wait, she thought. *Wasn't he an adult just like her parents?* "Uncle Mischa, will you come with me to the music school and register me for the audition?"

His smile returned as his small blue eyes glimmered.

They walked side by side down Lenin Street, but soon Ludmila, lanky and athletic, loped a few steps ahead, her dark braid bouncing against her back. She turned around to face him. "Let's go, Uncle Mischa." She didn't want to be late to the audition.

Uncle Mischa hobbled as fast as he could and still could not keep up. His right leg refused to bend. When they finally reached the stairs in front of the music school he gripped the handrail and limped up each steep step. Ludmila always knew that Uncle Mischa had a stiff leg but had never realized how much it hindered his ability to move.

That evening, Ludmila stood in the kitchen with her mother and reported her exciting news. She passed the audition and was assigned accordion and piano lessons. "Uncle Mischa signed me up," she said, picking up a stack of china dinner plates and following her mother to the family's outdoor dining table.

"Mom, why does Uncle Mischa walk so funny? What happened to his leg?"

Her mother sighed and stared over Ludmila's shoulder at something in the distance.

"He was shot. By Russian soldiers."

Ludmila set down the dinner plates. Her mother's hazel eyes, the same eyes that Ludmila saw when she looked at herself in the mirror, had lost their usual sparkle.

Ludmila wanted the whole story.

"It was during the war," her mother said. "I was 9 and Mischa was about 6." She told of the summer of 1944, when the Soviet Army recaptured Moldova from Romania. A group of soldiers with rifles came to their timber frame house and forced her father out of his woodworking shop. "You are now a member of the Soviet Army," he was told. He must join the soldiers on their march to Berlin or face a prison work camp. Within the hour, he was gone from Singerei, his carpentry tools left on his worktable.

The Russian soldiers who remained in town shot anyone associated with Romanian authorities, looted and destroyed property, raped young girls and threatened friends and neighbors. By day, Ludmila's mother's two older sisters were kept in a storage space near the kitchen, covered with colorful carpets, blankets and pillows. If anyone spotted a soldier nearby, the four youngest children pretended to play on top of their sisters.

One morning, a pair of Russian soldiers came to Ludmila's grandmother's house.

"Where is Mischa?" they asked, referring to a neighbor who had the same name. "He is under arrest." Mischa had been working for the Romanian government in Singerei.

When 6-year-old Mischa saw the soldiers, who looked just like the men who had taken his father away and made his mother cry; who grabbed the family's meat and wine and bread from their cupboards; who were so scary that his sisters hid under carpets and blankets; who shouted, "Where is Mischa?" — he fled to the bushes lining their yard.

The soldiers lifted their rifles and sprayed bullets into the air, into the bushes, one bullet after the other.

Ludmila's mother stood shocked in the yard. Her younger brother lay bleeding in the grass, bullet wounds in his knee.

Alone with the children in wartime, Ludmila's grandmother could not get proper medical assistance for her son. Only after the war was over and her husband returned, three years later, could she take Mischa to a hospital for a proper operation. But he would never be able to walk with ease.

"This is why," her mother said — her voice firm, her round, soft face serious — "I refuse to speak Russian."

Ludmila quietly set the dinner plates on the table, one for each member of her family: mother, father, two older sisters, Viorica and Tamara, her older brother Colea and the younger one, Leonea. An unfamiliar ache crept into her chest and throat. She had gotten the best marks in her history class that year, memorizing the accomplishments of Soviet communism: how Lenin brought economic prosperity, modern technology and collective living to Eastern Europe. How, during World War II, Soviet partisans saved everyone from Hitler. Her family had lived a different — a secret — history. There was so much more to learn.

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Ludmila stood in her bedroom and gazed at the bold black letters on the spine of a book the color of slate. They spelled the word *Severograd*, North Town. She had bought the thick novel at her favorite bookstore.

What kind of novel is this, she wondered? *A fantasy, like* Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea? *An adventure from another continent, like* The Salt Rocks Land, *about the natives of North America? A love story?* She had no idea.

Ludmila finished her household chores and hurried outside to the back of her family's small white house, book in hand. She climbed the wooden ladder to the attic doorway and stepped into her favorite reading place. Surrounded by the rainbow-colored rolls of yarn her mother used to weave her carpets, reclining in an old chair made cozy by plump pillows, Ludmila opened the strange gray book to the middle.

The words on the page transported her to a large ship crowded with crying men, women and children traveling down a wide river.

Why are they so upset?

She flipped back to the beginning of the book. The crying people were Moldovans on their way to Siberia, near the Arctic Circle, where they would suffer from fierce cold and lack of food. She read on, riveted. In Siberia, the Moldovans lived on top of each other in large barracks and almost worked themselves to death for a bit of black bread. One man, who tried to drag his wagon through a narrow tunnel, was killed by a passing train.

Who will feed his family?

Ludmila's eyes stung with tears that blurred the words on the pages of her book. She wanted to know why these Moldovans chose such a miserable life for themselves.

Ludmila found her mother in the garden examining the new blossoms on her pale pink tea roses. Her crown of dark braids was etched with early evening sunlight. A sultry breeze mixed the sweet rose scent and spicy fragrance of her mother's jasmine flowers into a familiar July perfume. Singerei — like the rest of Moldova — was so beautiful in summer. Why would anyone leave?

"Mom, why did people from Moldova go to a place like Siberia to live without food, without normal places to sleep, to die in the cold? We have sun. We have plenty of vegetables and fruit. We have flowers. Why would they want to go?"

"It was not their decision," replied her mother. "They were forced to go."

Another secret history lesson.

"Where did you hear this story?" her mother asked.

She described the chapters from *Severograd*.

"Don't speak too much about this book."

Ludmila begged for more information.

In a hushed voice, as if afraid someone might overhear, her mother began. "In 1949, I was 14. It was a very difficult time." Her family had a lot of land, and early one summer morning she and her sisters set off to work in one of their fields, only to find it filled with Russian trucks and guns and soldiers. The girls ran home, but before they reached their house they heard the moans of people crying. One of the neighbors, the kind lady who had taught her mother how to weave carpets, was being forced at gunpoint by a Russian soldier to leave her home. She was not the only one.

"But it is forbidden to talk too much about this."

A few days after their conversation, Ludmila walked to one of her favorite spots in Singerei, a mulberry forest on a hill. Nimbly, she scaled a tall mulberry tree to a sturdy upper branch. From there she could see the entire panorama of the town — its small shops, houses, treetops and farms. She imagined a Singerei filled with crying people, arrested by Russian officers and forced into airless cattle cars that brought them to the cold of Siberia, while other people from the Soviet Union moved into their homes, took over their land.

She remembered the Russian boys in her school, how they laughed at her when she came to their class to take attendance. "Your Russian is very bad," one boy sneered. But her family never spoke Russian at home, only Romanian. She had been so embarrassed by the boys' taunts then, but now she connected their arrogant ways to the history of Soviet oppression that still hung over

Moldova like a cloud as gray as the cover of *Severograd*. She would never forget the lessons contained in the pages of this book.

The Daughter of Victor Tabarcea

Stomp, snap, crunch. Ludmila, 15 years old, crushed another cornstalk with her foot. The sound of stomping, snapping, crunching by the other members of the children's brigade from the local *kolkhoz*[3] filled the dense, tall cornfield. But Ludmila could see no one. Ten days before, when the corn was no higher than her knees, she could easily see the look of pain on her teenage colleagues' faces as they tried to thin out the cornfield by breaking row after row of tough, sharp-edged stalks with their bare hands. To save their palms from cuts and abrasions, Ludmila suggested they all stomp down the cornstalks with their feet. But stomping on them didn't always kill the cornstalks. And, 10 days later, the corn had grown to the tops of the teenagers' heads and was difficult to wrestle down. Nor had the stalks grown tall enough to shade the children's brigade from the hot June sun.

Ludmila sighed. Sweat dampened the kerchief wrapped around her head, and her upper lip tasted of salt and dirt. She wiped away the rivulets of sweat with one very dirty arm.

Stomp, snap, crunch. She crushed another cornstalk in her row.

Further down the row, about two arm's lengths away, someone had tied a rope between two cornstalks. *How odd*, she thought. She walked closer to the rope, brown and ochre — and shiny. Ludmila froze. This was no rope; it was a snake, at least a meter long.

She took two careful steps away from the snake, turned and rushed headlong through the corn, crying. Arms out, she swam through cornstalks, afraid of brushing against another snake, afraid of suffocating in an ocean of corn.

When she finally reached the road, some girls from her brigade appeared at the edge of the cornfield and gathered around Ludmila. "What happened?" She told them about the snake, which had grown into an anaconda in her frightened memory.

The other teenagers stepped out of the cornfield and joined Ludmila and her cohort.

"A snake? Impossible," declared one of the boys.

"No, it's not. I saw it," said Ludmila, tears rushing again to her eyes.

"It's alright. You'll be all right. Let's go back to work," one of the girls suggested.

Ludmila stopped crying. Her heart beat a little slower. "I will not go back in that field for any money. *Basta*. You can go. I'm staying here."

"I want to stay here, too," said another girl. "My hands are so sore." Indeed, her palms looked like they'd been slashed red with a whip.

"We have to finish," another boy declared. "Besides it's just a small snake. It's not even poisonous."

"You can finish. Me, no," said Ludmila.

"If you're stopping," announced another girl, "I will too."

The girls agreed to follow Ludmila's lead. The boys joined them.

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When the pick-up truck arrived to bring the brigade back to the camp, the entire group of teenagers was waiting in the road. The driver said nothing but Ludmila knew there would be consequences for their actions. Sitting in the open bed of the truck, surrounded by laughing, singing boys and girls, Ludmila watched the apple and cherry orchards, the grape fields and walnut trees go by and tried to calm her anxious heart. She had chosen to work for the pioneer camp[4] to earn pocket money for a trip to Leningrad with other students from her school. But not even a million rubles could persuade her to return to the snake in the cornfield.

After a typical camp shower that started out tepid then turned cold, Ludmila and the others walked to the mess hall for dinner. In the middle of the meal, a supervising teacher walked over to the girls' table.

"I hear you have all decided to stop working."

"Yes," replied Ludmila. Unofficial spokesperson for the group, she aired their list of grievances, from the snake to the abrasive cornstalks.

"Tomorrow morning," said the teacher flatly, "you will return to the field."

But the teenagers were defiant and stayed at the camp the entire day.

The supervising teacher promised to call the director.

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The next afternoon, Ludmila and the other teenagers huddled together outdoors on benches facing the three officials: the camp director, the brigadier of the kolkhoz and the communist party secretary.

The supervising teacher stood on stage in front of the seated men. Arms akimbo, he began. "We are here because you have decided not to go to work."

Then the camp director gave a speech, reminding the children's brigade that the kolkhoz had been very generous to Singerei's schools, providing them with fruits and vegetables and funding. "You should give back something. You will be paid for your work, too. I am ashamed of you. This is the first time such an incident has occurred."

The members of Ludmila's cohort stared down at their laps.

Then the brigadier spoke. "You promised to finish," he said, banging his fist into his other hand. "I am disappointed in you. I did not expect such behavior. You are not serious."

The teenagers looked wide-eyed, like frightened rabbits. "We have to finish," whispered one of the boys.

Ludmila was afraid he might be right. But aside from the snake, the work was too hard, the conditions too rough for the children's brigade. The kolkhoz could easily pay adults to finish the job. Ludmila's hands were clammy and her heart raced. She stood up and leaned against a nearby tree. Its bark reached out like fingers; its weight cradled her back, giving her the support she needed to speak.

"I'm very sorry but you are wrong. This job is too difficult for us. The corn is too high and thinning hurts our backs and hands. We are just children; you could find us a cleaner job. For example, picking cherries is easier for children to do."

The adults and children said nothing; their gazes focused on Ludmila. The party secretary stared at her, his jaw clenched.

"Who is this girl?" he finally asked. His Moldovan was tinged with a heavy Russian accent.

The teacher gave Ludmila's name.

The brigadier raised an eyebrow. "Daughter of Victor Tabarcea?"

Looking squarely at Ludmila, the party secretary shook his head. "Ah, if this is the daughter of Victor Tabarcea then I'm not surprised that she's so bold. Others can keep silent but this family cannot."

Ludmila's whole body relaxed into the tree.

OK, I'm like my father, like both my parents. I spoke my truth.

Her father, a member of the party, was known for speaking up. Even if the secretary punished her, she knew she had done the right thing and her parents, like sturdy trees, would support her.

The adults consulted among themselves, then announced that they would inform the children's brigade of their plans at a later time.

For the second day in a row, Ludmila and the other teenagers got to sit under the trees at the camp, protected from the hot June sun.

"How did you speak up?" asked one of the girls. "Why weren't you scared?"

She had been scared, and she was still a little nervous about what would happen next. "Someone had to say something. We all made the decision together. We had to defend ourselves. If you start something you have to finish it, find solutions."

The next morning at breakfast the teacher announced: "Today the truck will bring you to the cherry orchard. Your job will now be to pick cherries." The other teenagers looked up from their plates and smiled at Ludmila. She breathed a sigh of relief, remembered a proverb her father used to recite: The head bent low is not cut by the sword; neither does it see the sun.

Ludmila wanted very much to see the sun.

Sweet and Bitter

Ludmila watched her father lop off another flower-filled branch from the family's jasmine tree. She picked it up and sniffed the blooms whose fragrance sweetened the crisp October air. Her father had insisted that their jasmine tree was so overgrown it would get in the way of the gigantic, 300-person tent he was building in the yard for her sister Viorica's wedding. So Ludmila promised to supervise the pruning while her father cut branches.

Now a student at the State Medical University in Chisinau, she still came back to Singerei often, more so lately to help her family prepare for the wedding. She had spent days transplanting and weeding so the yard would be filled with neat arrangements of eye-popping color.

"I have found music for your sister's wedding party," said Ludmila's father as he cut off the end of another jasmine branch. "Guess who it will be?"

For months, she and her sisters had been searching Singerei and nearby towns for live musicians to play at the wedding, but everyone was busy. Who could it be?

"Hah! Look here. We are getting the artistic director of the National Philharmonic, the artistic director of Theater Alecsandri and the conductor of the State Radio Symphony Orchestra."

"I don't believe it." *What was her father up to?* she wondered.

"Today I passed Mr. Goia on Lenin Street. He asked what was new. I told him about the music, how worried I was. He patted me on the shoulder and said, 'Go home. All my sons will sing at your daughter's wedding for free.' He said he would never forget the goodness our family made for theirs."

"I don't understand." She had seen her father and Mr. Goia greet each other when they met by chance but she never knew they had any kind of special friendship.

"It all began with my mother," he said, "years before you were born. She was at the market buying bread when she met Mrs. Goia, who was also shopping. They lived about 15 minutes away from each other and often stopped to talk on the street. Mrs. Goia shook her head sadly. 'I don't know what to do. I can't find a godparent for my first baby.'"

Ludmila's grandmother had heard about the Goia christening from other neighbors. No one in Singerei wanted to be a godparent to a gypsy. "I will be," she volunteered. Her grandmother became godmother to each of Mrs. Goia's three boys.

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On the day of Viorica's wedding, a big bus from the State Philharmonic drove up to the gate. Out poured men with microphones, amplifiers and other sound equipment, men and women with musical instruments and children, and Mr. and Mrs. Goia's three grown-up sons, the famous musical directors and conductors. Everyone called Ludmila's father *Nanu* Victor — godfather.

When he insisted on paying for the music, the sons refused. "Our father told us about your mother. When we first came to Singerei we were shunned by everyone," said Dumitru, the oldest, and the artistic director of the State Philharmonic. "But this lady, your mother, said, 'Why can't I be godmother for them? They are also people as we are.'"

Ludmila was proud of her grandmother. *It's so important to be a normal human being and not to divide people by color. Just help people. If you give something, you'll receive something back.* She remembered another proverb of her father's: The way you prepare your bed is how you will sleep.

That night the talented Goia family played and sang until dawn. When one of the uncles, an old man, played a gypsy violin solo, all the guests sat riveted to their seats. Ludmila too was entranced. The music soared like the white-winged egrets that camped along Singerei's lakes in summer, skittered like the reflections off the river Ciuluc, swirled like the infinite light spray of the Milky Way, a dazzling sight that her father pointed out on a camping trip when she was a child. The song, in both major and minor, was sweet and bitter — so much like life, which she was just beginning to understand.

The Meaning of a Smile

Ludmila couldn't breathe. In the middle of the night, choking from the pressure on her windpipe, she woke up screaming and pushed Igor's hands away from her.

He jumped up from the bed and turned on the light.

"I'm so sorry. My nightmares of Afghanistan have come back." He was shaking with fear and confusion.

Afghan syndrome. She and her teachers discussed it in psychiatry class. Soldiers who had returned from the Soviet-Afghan war, who had to kill or be killed, suffered from sleeplessness, depression and a pathological reaction to alcohol. The words were so abstract, but as a medical student living on campus she had seen the effects of the Soviet-Afghan war on returning soldiers. One night, a few years before, she woke up to the sounds of yelling, banging and glass breaking. A young veteran who lived on the eighth floor of her dormitory was beating his wife. The whole student body talked for days about how he attempted to push her out the window, then threatened to kill himself with a knife. Her younger brother, too, had changed since returning home from duty. He used to play with children younger than himself, and spoke in a soft, gentle voice. Now he shouted at the slightest provocation and used his fists to solve problems. He slept with the light on and often woke up screaming from his nightmares.

When Ludmila met Igor, she knew he was a veteran of the war in Afghanistan, but he was calm, kind and loving. When they married, he recited a proverb: "I can't promise you sea and salt but I promise you'll be happy with me." They laughed and danced together, made plans to travel to the seaside. Now that she was pregnant with their first child, they talked about having more children.

"Tell me about Afghanistan," she pleaded, trying to calm him down.

Igor couldn't. Like other soldiers in the war, he had signed a document promising not to talk about his experiences. Instead, he offered to sleep on the floor.

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Eleven years later, Ludmila was now a teacher and researcher in the microbiology department at the newly renamed State University of Medicine and Pharmaceutics, Nicolae Testemitanu. She loved to nurture her students and watch them soar in confidence and accomplishments. They also came to her for support, often staying after class to confess their worries about the pressures of attending a medical university. They asked her advice about personal problems, too, and even engaged her in small talk about mundane things like adult braces.

"You should have seen my smile before my braces," said one of her female students, whose teeth were now as straight as any actors' on television.

"I have problems, too," said Ludmila, pointing to the gap between her two front teeth, remnants of a childhood accident.

The student recommended her orthodontist. *Why not*, thought Ludmila. Focusing on her teeth — something that she could change — might distract her from her real worries about Igor's Afghan Syndrome. To control himself, he avoided meeting other veterans and even refused to renew his veterans' benefits. But more and more, he withdrew from social gatherings and no longer liked to make plans with her to travel, to have more children. She worried about her brother, too. By signing the agreement to not discuss their experiences in Afghanistan, the war stayed inside them.

Ludmila visited the orthodontist every two weeks from chilly March through the humid summer months. She could not heal her loved ones, but she could control her smile.

The orthodontist, whose office shelves were filled with college textbooks and walls decorated with educational diagrams of gums and teeth, also taught at the university. During one of her summer appointments, Ludmila asked about his students. She wanted to know if they were as depressed as hers.

"Sometimes I have to do group therapy before class," she said. Her students were anxious about the demands of medical school. They also worried about getting jobs in Moldova's poor, corrupt economy. "People are tired. Adults and students."

The orthodontist agreed. Moldova was filled with depressed, traumatized people. "You know, I have a colleague in Romania who works part-time as an orthodontist at a very interesting rehabilitation center." The center, called ICAR,[5] cared for people traumatized by Romanian communist dictator Nicolae Ceausecu's regime.[6]

His words resonated in her ears. "What do they do there?"

"They have professional psychologists, doctors, social workers and lawyers who work with trauma victims."

She knew that Moldova had its own share of political torture victims: people sent to Siberia and the gulag by the Soviets, persecuted members of Moldova's nationalist movement, and victims of the Moldovan-Russian war in the Transnistrian region.

Then there were all the veterans suffering from Afghan Syndrome. She wished that Moldova had a rehabilitation center to help her husband and her brother, a place to treat their post-traumatic stress disorder.

"I would love to talk to your colleague," she said.

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On a still-warm September afternoon, Ludmila sat on the terrace of a restaurant in Chisinau with Daniela Atanasiu, project assistant at Romania's ICAR Foundation. Together, they sipped coffee and discussed prospects for a Moldovan rehabilitation center for victims of torture.

"I'm very interested in helping traumatized veterans of the Afghan war," said Ludmila.

"I'm sorry, we don't have a program for this," Daniela replied. "Maybe in the future." She smiled apologetically. "But we do have an opportunity to fund a special project for victims of political torture from the Soviet era. Let's start with this target group."

The real victims of Severograd. Of course I will work with them.

•

Ludmila's logical, detail-oriented mind wanted to know everything about the health problems, emotional problems, kinds of treatment and legal rights of torture victims. When Camelia Doru, director of the ICAR Foundation, and the Contact Center, an umbrella organization for Moldovan nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), put together the first local seminar on medical and rehabilitation assistance for torture survivors, she soaked up all the information.

Turkish, Romanian and Greek experts gave presentations about political torture victims in their regions. She learned the most advanced medical techniques for documenting and diagnosing torture survivors, years after the trauma occurred, and how this evidence could help uphold victims' human rights in international court. She also understood, for the first time, the range of reactions people had to similar trauma and the different ways to help victims learn to rebuild their lives. She was so impressed by the worldwide network of support for victims of torture.

During the break a man who worked for the state, someone she had crossed paths with at the university, walked over to her. "So, you are the director of this new Moldovan center."

"I am only temporary," she insisted. Camelia and the center's other founders had asked her to be interim director in order to register the center with the Ministry of Justice. The search for a permanent director continued.

He leaned in closer to Ludmila's ear. "Be very careful. This topic is dangerous."

She understood. The day before, presenters talked about treating victims of present-day torture or political repression, not just those from past regimes.

"I think it's better for you to stay at the university and not get involved in this activity," he advised.

That was Ludmila's plan.

But after the break, when everyone returned to the large round table for the seminar, Camelia addressed the group. "May I have your attention, please," the sharp-featured, petite woman said into her microphone. "We have just received news from the Ministry of Justice. The Center for Rehabilitation of Torture Victims, which I have named Memoria, is registered in Moldova, and Ludmila Popovici is its director. Congratulations."

Everyone applauded. But Ludmila's heart beat wildly. She asked the colleague sitting next to her, another doctor, for sedatives. For four months, from the time she first phoned Camelia to ask if she could help start a rehabilitation center for torture victims in Moldova, through her agreement to act as interim director of Memoria, Ludmila never expected to actually be in charge. She had never worked in an NGO, was neither a general practitioner nor a psychologist, and she spoke no English — a skill that Camelia said was critical for the center's success. When people at the table asked Ludmila to say a few words, she froze. The room was silent.

"We don't need a medical doctor to direct this center," interjected a lawyer sitting by her. He worked for the local branch of Amnesty International. "Everyone knows that doctors in Moldova are corrupt."

The words shook Ludmila back to her senses. "You are a lawyer. Lawyers are not corrupt in Moldova?"

A few people in the audience chuckled.

She straightened her spine and spoke into her microphone. "First of all, I'm working for the university. Secondly, if I know one thing, it's that I tell the truth or I won't say anything. I ask the same from others."

"I agree," said Camelia. "Ludmila is a fighter. She will be a good director."

That evening, collapsed in an armchair in Camelia's hotel room at the Hotel Dacia, Ludmila shook her head. "What do I do now? I have no idea."

"Calm down," said Camelia, who was sitting on the bed, still wide awake.

Wiry, tireless Camelia — Ludmila's guide into the world of NGOs and rehabilitation centers — was one of the strongest women she knew. She knew so much about assisting survivors and supervised rehabilitation centers all over Eastern Europe. By following Camelia's advice, she would be OK.

"One of the first things you should do is to write a new project proposal very, very quickly." She counted each task on the fingers of her hand. "Start with the social and political context in Moldova. Identify target groups and describe them, their present situation and their needs."

The first target group that Ludmila was working with, the one that most closely resembled the clients at ICAR, was a group of older Moldovans who were victims of Soviet political repression from the 1940s through the early '50s — the real protagonists of *Severograd*, the novel that had so disturbed her childhood imagination. They spent their youth in Soviet prisons or exiled to gulags, where they suffered from starvation, extreme cold and physical exhaustion from inhumane working conditions. Many of their parents had been detained or killed, their families' properties nationalized. The children of once prosperous families, they grew up poor and stigmatized, labeled "children of enemies of the people." As adults, they still suffered emotionally and physically from their childhoods. Many of them had joined together to become the Association of Former Political Prisoners. Ludmila had the secretary's contact number. "But my English …"

"Write down everything in Romanian. We will translate for you."

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On the last day of 1999, Ludmila ran around Chisinau feeling as scattered as the snowflakes that were twirling above her in the winter wind. The International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims had agreed to fund Memoria's first proposal: a six-month pilot project with Moldovan victims of Soviet repression. December 31 was the deadline to apply for continued project funding from the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Torture Victims.

With no computer of her own, Ludmila spent the past weeks typing in various friends' offices or homes after teaching at the medical university. She stored her work on diskettes. That New Year's Eve she was using a student computer at the technical college where her cousin worked. But the diskette with the proposal on it had become corrupt, the file irretrievable. Her only backup was a print version of the treatise. One of her students suggested visiting a friend of his who owned software she had never heard of, something called "voice recognition." So Ludmila took public transportation to the boy's apartment and watched in shock as he read the treatise into a microphone plugged into his computer.

Within a few hours, Ludmila took a taxi to the post office to get the new, finished proposal stamped and sent out in time for the deadline.

The snow-filled sky was dark by the time she climbed into the trolley that would take her to her house. Once home, she lay down on the couch, exhausted. Her 10-year-old son, Victor, was away in Romania for winter break, courtesy of a friend who knew how busy Ludmila would be. But Igor wanted to celebrate the new millennium. She prepared a festive dinner with roasted chicken and special vegetable salads that she liked to make. He opened a bottle of champagne.

"Happy New Year, my dear."

"Happy New Year," replied Ludmila, clinking her glass with his. She had no idea what the new year — or the new millennium — would have in store, but she knew that working at Memoria would help them understand and cope with the shadow of the Afghan War.

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By the time Ludmila got to the villa on Frumoasa Street, she had nearly worn holes in the heels and toes of her boots. For three months, on the advice of friends, relatives and the internet, she had been searching Chisinau for a place to house Memoria. The center's limited budget and need for light, ventilation, ample space and proper plumbing made it nearly impossible to find anything suitable in the city center, the most accessible part of Chisinau. It was now mid-March and the center was scheduled to open on April 15.

26 Frumoasa was a two-story, cream brick villa with a garden area, five trolley stops from the city center. Ludmila liked the quiet, tree-lined street and soft-edged front steps that led to a small, unimposing door. The second floor had enough space to give the general practitioner and cardiologist separate rooms, the psychotherapist another, the social worker a desk in the reception area, one room for the director, accountant and legal advisor, and the kitchen. On March 20, Ludmila signed the rental agreement.

For the next 26 days, Ludmila taught in the morning and worked in Memoria in the afternoons and in the evenings — painting, planting, cleaning, arranging and supervising plumbers and carpenters. Most of her staff helped too: Svetlana the psychiatrist, whom Ludmila had met when they were both university students; the general practitioner Rodica, whose daughter went to the same school as Ludmila's son; Victor, an accountant who she found on an internet jobs list; and Igor, who volunteered his services as a lawyer until Memoria could find a part-time legal advisor.

By April 15, Memoria was ready. Ludmila had filled the garden with daylilies and new trees. Inside, she and her staff painted one psychotherapy room in her favorite color, a soothing pale blue-green. For the other she chose a pink like the color of her mother's tea roses. The rest of the rooms were white, light green or sky blue, all colors that made her smile. Ludmila and her staff were ready. All they needed was for their first beneficiary to walk through the front door.

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"Yes, my dear. By all means, come and visit," said the kind voice on the phone, the voice of a woman named Lucia Caranicolov.

A colleague had given Ludmila the phone number the winter before Memoria opened, when Ludmila was looking for potential beneficiaries. Lucia was the secretary of the Association of Former Political Prisoners and might have names for her.

On a snowy evening in February, Ludmila visited Lucia at her apartment. The older woman, about the same age as Ludmila's mother, carefully made up and smartly dressed, welcomed Ludmila with a smile and a kiss on both cheeks. She offered tea and more. "I have a lot of information."

One whole room in Lucia's small apartment was filled with books and newspapers chronicling the country's pro-independence movement before Moldova became a nation in 1991. This small, smiling woman had stopped Soviet tanks in the center of Chisinau during pro-independence demonstrations. She also had a list of people who had been victims of Soviet oppression — Memoria's first target group for rehabilitation.

The first beneficiaries to walk into Memoria in April 2000 were drawn from Lucia's list. She herself came to register a month later.

In the blue-green therapy room, surrounded by heart-shaped philodendron plants, Ludmila led the intake session while the general practitioner and psychotherapist took notes at their desks. Lucia sat in a plush armchair.

"Tell us your story, please," said Ludmila.

Lucia was born in Baroncea in 1932, near the Romanian border, the only child of a teacher and the headmaster of a village school. When she was 9 years old, Stalin's Soviet regime took over Moldova. Her mother was arrested on false charges and sent to prison in Russia. A few months later, at 1 o'clock in the morning, Soviet soldiers came to the family home to take away her father, a prosperous man who had also served in the Romanian Army. Lucia ran out of the house dressed in her nightgown, hugging her doll to her chest. A soldier caught her and placed her in a horse-drawn cart with her father, who was crying. Together, they were transported to the airless, hot cattle car of a train. The car was crowded with other Moldovans forced from their homes. At the border of Ukraine, all the men, including her father, were taken off the train. Many years later, Lucia learned that they were taken to the forest, shot, and shoveled into a mass grave.

For the next month, Lucia traveled to Siberia in the steamy car that smelled of excrement and body odor. No one was given food or water, and any person who died along the way was left by the railroad tracks. Eventually, she and six Moldovan women — two from her village — were sent to live in a one-room house with an old woman. As enemies of the state, the Moldovans were not allowed to work for pay. They sold whatever they had brought with them to buy food. Lucia had nothing to sell.

"Do you know how I survived this?" she asked. "I collected the peelings from potatoes and the outer leaves of cabbages that Russian people threw away behind their kitchens. The adults were too ashamed to be seen picking through garbage, but I was only 9. A child."

Eventually, she fled to another town where she was able to find paid work. Her mother, who had finally been released from prison, found her. Together they escaped back to Moldova —

jumping off one train then onto another, in order to travel without getting caught by Soviet authorities.

Lucia told her entire story with a smile on her round-cheeked face, a smile that belied a childhood begun in privilege that became a fight for basic survival, a fight that continued into adulthood when Lucia petitioned for compensation for the killing of her father and the nationalization of her family's property. It was unsuccessful.

Ludmila could not control her tears. Lucia survived. Many Moldovans survived the gulag. They came back to Moldova and worked hard to rebuild their lives as best they could. But they were still deeply traumatized, and ignored by the rest of society. When the country was under Soviet occupation they were too afraid to speak about their past and no one wanted to listen. Their grandchildren had no idea about the legacy they had inherited.

This is the drama of our people, thought Ludmila. *This had to change.*

Defaming the State

"Come to the center. A policeman is here," whispered Svetlana, Memoria's psychotherapist, over the phone. "He wants to talk about the center."

It was a November morning, and Ludmila was standing in a crowded trolley on her way to work. "Don't discuss anything with him. I will be there soon."

When she arrived, a young police officer was standing in the hallway with a manila file folder. Shaking but composed, Ludmila introduced herself and invited him into the blue-green psychotherapy room.

"We need to have a meeting about your activity and about this very strange center," he stated in an unnaturally deep voice. "You claim that our country uses torture. According to legislation, there is no legally recognized torture in Moldova, so you have no right to speak about it."

Just two days before, Memoria had held a seminar on victims of torture for medical specialists from the district's main medical institution. Presenters at the seminar openly declared that Moldova used torture to force arrested people to confess to crimes they didn't commit. One presenter showed pictures of a young man who had been arrested and beaten by the police, but in Ukraine.

"So, you've come here by order of your superiors?" she asked, with a slight smile.

The policeman nodded. He couldn't have been more than 22, almost the same age as her students. In as kind and motherly a voice as possible, she said: "Please, imagine for a minute that you are a student, not a policeman, and you are walking down the street when suddenly you are attacked by three strange people. You are brought to a police station and beaten for a crime, but you have no idea what the crime is."

The young policeman's eyes widened. "Something like this happened?"

"Yes, with one of our beneficiaries. He was a young man. Like you."

The policeman's face softened. "You know, you are at risk. You could be arrested for defaming the state."

"Who sent you to our center?" she asked.

"The commissar." [7]

"Please, let me have his number. I think it is better if I call him."

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Ludmila phoned her husband, a lawyer, before the meeting. When he warned her not to go, she simply replied, "If I don't come home, please find me."

She thought of her strategy. Moldova's poor, unstable economy was a breeding ground for civil unrest. Confrontations between civilians and the police had been nearly constant throughout the previous year, and over 100 policemen had been attacked and 11 killed. At the same time, she also knew that two members of the local force had robbed and murdered a taxi driver. Her argument would be that the overly aggressive police force had an image problem. They were hated and feared by the public. And the force was filled with veterans from the Soviet-Afghan war who were probably suffering from Afghan Syndrome.

She asked her legal advisor to join her so that someone would be able to contact her husband — just in case she did not come home.

At 3 p.m., they arrived for the meeting with the commissar. He was sitting calmly in his office with a prosecuting attorney.

"I'm sorry," Ludmila said. "I can wait here in the hallway."

"No, no. Come in," the commissar replied. "My colleague and I have no secrets from one another."

"And I have no secrets about my organization," she said, her tone friendly despite the sound of her heartbeat in her ears. "You know," she said, her hands folded in her lap, "our activity is very important to you."

The commissar looked at her, puzzled.

"Sometimes things that should not happen are happening at police stations." She made sure not to use the words police brutality or police torture. "We assist victims by helping them overcome this difficult situation so they can continue their lives and not seek revenge against policemen — because, you know, statistics are like this. And it is important to help these people because, on the one hand, they have problems. On the other hand, they do have rights according to the UN Convention Against Torture, Article 14."[8] She proceeded to give the commissar and prosecutor a lesson on torture.

"But, madame," said the commissar, "we do not have anything in our laws about torture."

"This is true. But Moldova signed the UN Convention. I think we will have to change legislation soon because the first article of the UN Convention does apply.[9]

"OK," the commissar said with a shrug. His cohort yawned.

Ludmila changed her strategy. "Are you sure that, at your police station, you have psychologically healthy workers with no problems?"

The commissar leaned his elbow on his desk and rested his chin in his hand for what seemed like an eternity.

Finally, he almost smiled. "No," he said. "I'm not sure if they're OK."

Ludmila sensed an opening. "Some people who may have been mistreated as children," she explained, "who were maybe beaten or were victims of violence, or who participated in this war in Afghanistan, you know, they need a special approach." She recounted what she had learned at a summer school for psycho-traumatology in Dubrovnik earlier that year, from people who had worked with veterans from Vietnam, Israel and the former Yugoslavia. The school stressed how important it was to understand the perpetrator, as well as the victim, in conflict situations.

The prosecutor stood up, went to the window and looked outside.

OK, maybe I have found the right approach here. Her body began to relax a little.

"In fact," she continued, "policemen see a psychologist only at the start of their careers and, after that, only once a year for a psychological test. I know this is not enough." She made sure to tell the commissar that she understood how difficult the situations were that policemen found themselves in. "They work with criminals, drug addicts, dangerous people with weapons. They need a special approach that includes psychological assistance."

At the end of the three-hour discussion, the commissar introduced her to the vice commissar, who was in charge of education. Both asked Ludmila to prepare a lecture for the city's police. Relieved by their interest, she was happy to comply.

•

That December about 60 young policemen in gloves and scarves and coats walked into the commissariat's huge auditorium. It was so cold their white breath hung in the air. Many looked annoyed to be there. The vice commissar sat in the audience, too. He had told her, weeks before, "The department needs this, after those two policemen killed the taxi driver."

Ludmila began her talk, "The Consequences of Violence and Torture on Perpetrators," by handing out a test. Each question asked something about the policemen's level of aggressiveness, self-control or ability to communicate, as well as their involvement in their jobs, families, society, hobbies and education. She collected the tests and promised to make recommendations to the commissar based on the results.

Then she drew the scarf around her neck a little tighter and began her talk. She described perpetrators from the wars in Yugoslavia and Vietnam. In their civilian lives they suffered from a number of problems, from alcohol dependence to aggression to depression. Some also developed brain damage, heart problems or physical ailments caused by extreme stress. A few committed suicide. Their suffering had a negative impact on their jobs and their personal lives, too. Even if they could hide their shame about the violence they had committed, when they looked in the mirror they felt so terrible that they often acted violently against their own families or hurt themselves. She said very little about veterans of the Afghan war. She didn't have to.

The only sound coming from the audience in the auditorium was the scratch of pens on paper; the policemen were taking notes. When they weren't furiously writing, they were staring at Ludmila, wide-eyed, rapt.

At the coffee break, they came up to her with questions. Many were smiling.

"Why did you ask about hobbies?" a few of them asked.

"What kind of hobby do you have?" she asked in turn.

"I don't know," said one of the policemen.

"I forgot," said another.

A third said: "I wasn't interested in a hobby. I didn't think it was important."

After the seminar, she compiled results from the test and an evaluation that she had given to the policemen at the end of the lecture. The picture they painted was clear. A lot of the men had trouble relating to their families, were unhappy with their jobs, felt demonized by society, and were poorly educated. She gave her findings and a report to the vice commissar, the commissar and the minister of the interior. Her recommendations included psychological assistance, better job conditions and better salaries, continued education and creative outlets. "It's a problem in the system," she told them. "You have to solve this."

After the lecture, the police no longer came to Memoria to tell her she was defaming the state. But it took two more years, until 2005, for the Moldovan court to create a special article on torture.

A Circle of Support

By the time he was brought to Memoria, he was feverish and could barely breathe.

The young man from Tanzania had arrived in Moldova alone, illegally, unable to speak the language. Immediately, he was sent to prison in Chisinau, where he was neglected until he contracted a heart infection. "He needs to be hospitalized right away," the center's cardiologist told Ludmila. "He might die."

Memoria could pay for some of his medication but not his hospital tests and treatment. Ludmila called the Immigration Department, demanding that they take financial responsibility.

"Look here. If this person dies, you are responsible," she insisted.

"It's Friday. Tell him to come in on Monday."

"But he might die by Monday."

She called someone she knew in the Ministry of Health who gave her other contacts. Finally, after several more phone calls, the Department of Refugees agreed to pay his bills.

For two years after his release, the young man from Tanzania came to Memoria every couple of weeks for tests and treatment. In that time, Ludmila heard numerous complaints from her first target group of beneficiaries.

"Why are you testing him, that man with the dark skin?" asked a member of the group as he passed Ludmila in the corridor. Like other beneficiaries who had been tortured and displaced during the Stalinist era, he often stopped to talk to her and wasn't afraid to speak his mind.

"My dear, he has the right to come to our center, too."

The beneficiary crossed his arms in front of his chest. "You haven't any money because you assist these others. You don't care about your own people." He shook his head and walked away.

Another member of the group came to her office and announced: "You have more clients but fewer of us. It is not fair."

She sighed. This was true. The number of clients at Memoria had increased to over 500 in the four years since it opened its doors. At least one-third of them were refugees, recent political prisoners and victims of police brutality. And yes, it was true that more money was available for these new groups; there was not enough staff or room to treat everyone.

She loved her first beneficiaries, the retired men and women who had suffered so much in silence. They blossomed at Memoria, in group therapy and creative activities. Sometimes, when Ludmila arrived at work, they would all be waiting at the doorstep. They thought of Memoria as theirs. But the young man from Tanzania needed the center as much as anyone. So did the other new clients.

•

In a room with a fireplace in Chisinau's House for Writers, around a long oak table, Ludmila sat with representatives of Memoria's diverse beneficiaries: victims of torture from the Stalinist era, more recent political prisoners, victims of police brutality, and refugees. To honor 2004's International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, she invited each of them to tell their stories.

The center's first beneficiaries sat huddled together, refusing to look at anyone else. Three representatives from the group recounted stories of young, prosperous Moldovan lives completely destroyed by Soviet forces during and just after World War II. They were stripped of their rights and forced into lives of near starvation and backbreaking work in the gulag. Their pasts left physical and emotional scars.

Ion Smoleanchin spoke next. Born in Moldova after his parents returned from the gulag, he heard about Memoria from relatives who were beneficiaries of the center. In the 1980s, he joined rallies in Chisinau protesting for an independent Moldova with Romanian as its national language. He was arrested three times during these peaceful demonstrations — always for crimes that he didn't commit.

Ion, now a middle-aged man, sat at the table with his hands clenched, describing how in detention police beat him severely, particularly on his head, back and kidneys. They also tried to strangle him with the red, yellow and blue flag of Romania. He was given limited food, water and access to a bathroom, and was forced to write false confessions. The police continuously threatened to beat him again or simply to kill him. No longer able to work because his organs were so severely damaged, he lived off a small disability pension. Memoria was one of the only places where he felt safe.

After Ion spoke, Ludmila scanned the faces of the older beneficiaries. Many had tears in their eyes.

"A friend and I were on our way home from a disco when a couple of men in a car stopped and asked us for cigarettes," recounted a young man from Leova, just outside of Chisinau. "We said we didn't have any." About to go their separate ways, he and his friend hugged each other goodbye. "Ah, you're gay!" yelled the men in the car. "Come here!" They beat the boys and then arrested them. The men were plainclothes police.

In detention, the young man pleaded, "Don't beat me. I'm a law student." The police officers hit harder. The next day when his mother finally found him at the police station, he could barely stand. His face was purple and swollen. "She said she could not recognize me."

Ludmila was proud that Memoria's doctors and therapists supported his healing process and the center's staff had begun the legal process needed to make an allegation of torture. But when the young man spoke she still detected a slight tremor in his voice and hands.

"Oh my God," said one of the older beneficiaries. "What is happening in these police stations?"

The beneficiary from Sudan told his story in Russian. He had been a medical student in Russia and fell in love with a Moldovan woman, so he continued his studies in Chisinau. The civil war in Sudan cut him off from loved ones and any financial support. Anxious about caring for his wife and ailing child, and suffering from memories of his past in the Sudanese army, he came to Memoria for counseling and medicine. So did his wife. With the center's help, they were learning to manage their finances and find cures for their daughter's illnesses.

Then the young man from Tanzania introduced himself and said the few words he knew in English. Ludmila translated his story. "He was arrested by our authorities and suffered very much from the inhuman conditions in our prisons. Our state is guilty. That's why I have to assist him."

Again, Ludmila saw tears wash the pale cheeks of Memoria's victims of Soviet repression.

"I have four boys," said a woman who had recently escaped from Chechnya. "They were young but I knew they would soon be targets." Mercenary soldiers in the Russian army came to her village looking for a terrorist. No one knew who or where he was. So the soldiers grabbed a boy of 16, beat him, bound his legs together and connected them to their helicopter. They circled the helicopter just above the trees, making sure that the boy's head hit tree trunks and branches. He did not survive. "They forced us to look," she whispered.

A heavy quiet enveloped the room, but Ludmila could feel concern and respect for this mother emanating from everyone's silence. She thanked the woman from Chechnya and all the participants and beneficiaries for their courage. She then invited them to participate in the reception.

Amid the juice and tea and sweets, all the beneficiaries hugged and kissed each other.

The victims of Soviet political repression agreed that Ion Smoleanchin, who continued to air his political critiques on the radio, was a national hero.

One member of the group scooped up a bunch of cookies. "Here, take these for your daughter," he said to the refugee from Sudan.

"I know how hard it must be for you," said another group member to the young man from Tanzania. "We were in your situation in Siberia."

Ludmila could tell by the young man's smile that he understood the sentiment, if not all the words.

Proof

Ludmila walked into Memoria on the last day of April in 2006, expecting to meet a lawyer. Instead, a young boy in a man's suit sprung up from his chair in the hallway and announced: "I've been waiting for you. I'm Roman Zadoinov, lawyer."

She invited him into the mint-green room for psychotherapy and offered him a seat on the couch. Igor, her husband, joined them.

"This is my first case," said the lawyer, holding out his palms like a beggar. "I have no idea what to do."

Just days after he put his first ad in the newspaper, a woman called, crying and pleading for legal help. Her son Vitalie was being held in detention at a Chisinau police station.

"I know he's innocent but I don't know what to do," said the lawyer. "It's been a week since they beat him and I'm afraid that all the signs will disappear by the time we go to trial."

Zadoinov described the purple mounds on the back of his new client's head, the look of fear in his eyes. According to Vitalie, three policemen had tied his hands and feet together behind his back and positioned a metal bar under his arms. They threw a coat over his head, suspended him in the air, and beat him on the back of his skull with a chair while playing loud music to mask the sound of his screams. He had no rope marks because they had covered his hands with cloth.

Surely these policemen know about our center's examinations. They only hit on the head, leaving surface damage that clears up quickly.

"Do you know anything about his life before his arrest?" Ludmila asked.

Zadoinov shook his arms in the air in frustration. "It was impossible to have a normal conversation with him."

Ludmila stated, "I need to talk to relatives who knew him before the arrest."

•

On the couch in Memoria's psychotherapy room, Vitalie Colibaba's mother could not stop crying. Ludmila gave her something to calm her down and then told her she could cry for one hour. Then she needed to be strong for her son.

"He was a gentle, good person," said Mrs. Colibaba. He lived alone in an apartment in the center of Chisinau and usually ate at a nearby café. One evening while eating dinner, he noticed a

group of men at a table who loudly refused to pay their bill. They were teasing the young waitress who was attending them, and touching her against her will.

Vitalie walked over to them. "Why aren't you paying for your dinner?"

One of the men shouted: "Why? Do you want to pay for us?" He and his cohorts laughed. They were obviously drunk.

"I'm paying for myself," Vitalie insisted. "You should pay for yourselves, too."

Early the next morning, three policemen came to his apartment and arrested him for attacking an officer and intending to kill him. Vitalie recognized one of the men from the group of drunken bullies at the café the night before. The three officers brought him to the police station and beat him until he lost consciousness. After the lawyer's first visit, they beat him again with big plastic bottles filled with water.

"I filed a complaint," said Mrs. Colibaba, tears filling her eyes again.

The prosecutor's office started an investigation but the policeman from the café, who beat Vitalie at the police station, also assisted during his medical exam and helped write the legal report — which claimed there were no beatings.

"Please, help us," pleaded Mrs. Colibaba.

Ludmila promised to try.

•

"It's your job to challenge this illegal medical examination," said Ludmila to Roman Zadoinov, when they met again at Memoria.

She and her husband Igor had gone over all the case information together, agreeing that Roman's inexperience made an already difficult case even harder. Then he encouraged her to counsel the lawyer herself. "I know you can do this," he said. Ludmila was not so sure.

"You have two options," she said to Zadoinov, trying to sound confident. "The first is to go to the judge and ask, in written form, to release Vitalie for a thorough medical exam by medical specialists who can make diagnostic investigations into the damage inside his head. If the judge says no, then go directly to the European Court for Human Rights."

•

"He's released," Roman announced on the phone. "We're coming directly to you."

Fifteen minutes later, she faced Vitalie Colibaba in the hallway of Memoria. She tried very hard to control her tears. The thin boy stared at the floor, cowering between his lawyer and crying mother. His skin was the color of ashes.

"You are in good hands now. I will try to help you," she said as she hugged Vitalie. He smelled of urine, sweat and fear. Then she advised him to go directly to the neurological hospital for tests.

•

Ludmila acted on pure intuition when she insisted that Vitalie be tested as soon as he was released. Experts concluded that he suffered from cranial trauma. But the Moldovan court dismissed the case due to lack of evidence. They used the suspect examinations by the Center for Forensic Medicine and the three policemen's testimony as proof. An appeal was denied. Ludmila told Roman that it was time to take the case to the European Court for Human Rights.

She was not surprised when the Moldovan prosecutor general wrote a letter to the Moldovan Bar Association threatening to bring criminal charges against Roman. Claiming that the lawyer complained to Amnesty International about the Colibaba case, the prosecutor wrote: "These organizations are used as an instrument for serving personal interests and for avoiding the criminal responsibility of suspected persons." He also wrote that such practices by lawyers defamed the state. She knew this was simply a tactic to silence justice. The Moldovan Bar Association agreed and dismissed the letter as an attempt to intimidate lawyers.

Ludmila closely followed the case. In October 2007, the European Court for Human Rights voted in favor of Vitalie Colibaba's case against the Moldovan government. This was the first time that Memoria's findings were used as evidence in international court. Ludmila was proud of her intuition. Getting Vitalie tested as soon as he was released from court validated his and the lawyer's claim that he had been tortured while in detention.

At the same time, the Moldovan court condemned Vitalie to five years in prison for "an attempt on a policeman's life." On appeal, the sentence was commuted: once a month, for five years, he had to register at the police station. Vitalie and Roman filed a case against the three policemen; it soon got lost in limbo in the Moldovan court system.

When she saw Vitalie at Memoria a few months after his release, Ludmila didn't recognize him. She remembered a frail, small boy with grayish skin who could barely speak. But after regular therapy and medication at the center, he had gained weight and healthy color. Standing straight and tall, he was a strapping young man who could now look her in the eye — and say thank you.

Transnistria[10]

How many have to die?

Ludmila stared out the kitchen window at the street below, her tears blurring the sight of the processing outside. A crowd of crying men and women and somber police in uniform followed a casket balanced on the shoulders of six mourners.

For days she had been witnessing funerals of Moldovan policemen-turned-soldiers killed by Russian bullets or bombs in the Transnistrian region.

"Mom, are you crying because of my pain?" asked 3-year-old Victor, his bandage-wrapped legs splayed on her lap.

"No," said Ludmila, patting her son's pale cheek. She was amazed by his sincerity and innocence, but she couldn't stop crying. It was 1992, just one year after Moldova's independence. What did Russia want from her tiny new country, whose only source of minerals and energy, the Transnistrian region, was still ruled and funded by Russian forces?

"I'm not crying. Why are you crying?" Victor asked in his small, serious voice.

He was finally mending after a month in the hospital. She had to be strong for him while the skin on his legs healed. He had accidentally overturned a kettle of boiling water on the stove and suffered severe burns. She needed to spare him from her despair over the deaths in Moldova's tiny army. Daily, they faced attacks from Transnistrian separatists supported by Russia's 14th Army and 40,000 tons of ammunition left from the former Soviet Union, as well as mercenary soldiers from Russia's prisons.

Early mornings or evenings, when the distant boom of bombs and the clatter of Kalashnikovs echoed from the front line only 15 kilometers from their house, Ludmila had to keep her terror to herself. Most of all, she needed to hide her biggest worry, that Victor's father, Igor, now a law student, was considering joining other volunteers in the new Moldovan army. This would leave her in Chisinau to take care of Victor and an ailing uncle who lived with them, all while teaching and researching microbiology at the medical university.

"Mom, I want to eat something." Victor brushed her arm.

"OK," she said, kissing the russet whorl at the top of his head.

She put him on a kitchen chair, then searched the cupboards and refrigerator. After spending a month going back and forth between the university and the hospital to be with Victor, there was little to eat in the house. Food was disappearing from Chisinau's markets. Igor was out searching the city for food and household supplies, but Victor was hungry now. The only things that Ludmila

could find were a slice of bread and a couple of eggs. She couldn't cook them on the stove — they had no gas. Chisinau's energy, pumped from a power plant in the Transnistrian region, had been cut off by Russia. But Ludmila had brought home an alcohol lamp from the microbiology lab the day before the university closed.

She coated a small metal plate with cooking oil, then poured a bit of alcohol into the little glass lamp. With a match, she lit the wick and cooked the eggs and bread on the heated metal plate over the lamp's flame. Her stomach growled with hunger but Victor was satisfied with his meal and wanted to go outside.

She bundled him up to protect him from the unusually chilly and damp May air and took him to the shared courtyard at the foot of their apartment building. Too new a tenant and too busy a parent to get to know her neighbors, she was not surprised to find unfamiliar faces there. But she didn't expect to see at least a dozen stone and brick campfire pits dotting the courtyard's barely green ground.

In one corner, an older woman in a winter coat smiled and waved a gloved hand in their direction. She was leaning over and stirring something in a pot over a campfire. Ludmila waved back.

"Come here," beckoned the woman. "Now we'll make a good soup."

I remember her. She lives on the second floor. Ludmila picked Victor up and brought him to the warm fire.

"You can come here and cook too," said the woman, handing her a bowl of root vegetable soup.

"But I don't have any food at home."

The woman insisted that Ludmila take extra soup back to her apartment.

Over the next few days, whenever she ran into neighbors in the yard, on the sidewalk or in the building, they said hello and asked if she needed anything. Some of them came to her door with fruit, stews, soup or something sweet for Victor.

OK. We will survive.

Yes, the neighbors had the fear of war in their eyes — so did she — but that didn't stop them from helping her.

•

"It's clear your children have suffered," said Ludmila to the dozen crying, question-filled relatives of people arrested in the Transnistrian region who gathered around her in the small meeting room. It was just after a seminar by an organization called Promo-LEX. "They're victims of torture according to Article 1 of the UN Convention Against Torture."

Promo-LEX had invited her to its May 2010 seminar to give a general presentation about Memoria's services for relatives of detainees in Transnistrian prisons. But the anxious audience so obviously needed answers to specific questions about their family's cases that she couldn't help but get involved in a dozen detailed discussions. Finally, running out of time, she urged them to become beneficiaries of Memoria so she could continue to help them.

During one of the coffee breaks, a tired-eyed couple, Stela and Alexandru, came to her begging for help.

"Our son Ilie Cazac's case is particular," said Stela. Ilie was a 25-year-old Transnistrian tax inspector who was wrongfully accused of spying for Moldova. After his arrest in March, they heard no more information about him. "We don't know if he's dead," she said, "or in a Transnistrian prison."

I can't refuse to help them. I am a mother, too. Painful memories of her own experience as a new mother during the Russian-Moldovan war, officially declared over 18 years before, filled her with certainty. "Come to Memoria," she said. As secondary victims of torture, they could be treated for emotional and physical problems and use the center's legal advisors to find out more about their son.

One month later, instead of treating Stela and Alexandru at Memoria, Ludmila visited them at the tent they had set up in front of the Russian embassy in Chisinau. They decided to leave Transnistria, live in the tent, and go on a hunger strike until they could see their son and get the Russian-backed Transnistrian government to treat him justly.

On June 26, the international day commemorating victims of torture, Memoria, Promo-LEX and other partner organizations joined Stela and Alexandru to protest Transnistria's treatment of Ilie. Moldovan radio, television and newspaper journalists — more keen to cover political torture since Moldova's troubles in 2009[11] — pointed their microphones at Ludmila and asked what she thought of the Ilie Cazac case.

"Everything his parents have said indicates that he is a victim of torture. He's being used by Transnistrian authorities to scare other people in the Transnistrian region into giving information."

A few weeks after her remarks, a trusted person who worked for a Moldovan institution warned her not to travel through Transnistria that summer. Transnistrian authorities had put her name on a blacklist. Frightened by the threat, Ludmila followed her colleague's advice. Instead of

traveling through the area, she visited Ilie's parents, who were weak and anxious from their hunger strike. A couple of days later, Stela had to be taken by ambulance to the hospital.

Ludmila brought water and children's milk formula to Ilie's father in the tent. "I can help you get out from this hunger strike, but I need you to officially register as Memoria beneficiaries."

The next day, in front of his tent, Alexandru made a statement to Moldovan media. "Ludmila Popovici convinced me to stop the hunger strike, but we will stay in this tent until we can see our son."

Now that he and his wife were Memoria beneficiaries, Ludmila and her team could work more intensively with the World Organisation Against Torture on an international appeal for justice for Ilie. But getting all the legal details needed to prove that he was victim of torture was difficult. Up until that summer, his parents were only allowed to hire a Transnistrian-government-approved lawyer, who charged lots of money and did almost nothing. Ilie's mother, who was finally allowed to see her son in prison, gathered a few stories about beatings and threats, but Ludmila had little else to work with.

She wrote a letter to Transnistria's Minister of Justice and the head of the prison medical department officially asking for information about Ilie Cazac's health. To her surprise, the Minister of Justice agreed to cooperate. So she became bolder. "If a person is in your custody, you are responsible for his health," she wrote back to him. "If this person is not receiving adequate medical assistance, especially when he is suffering from severe pain, then this inaction can be defined as inhuman treatment — or even torture."

The Minister of Justice forced the head of the prison's medical department to work with Ludmila. She sent letters asking about Ilie's health status and used the negative and contradictory responses to prove that Ilie had serious health problems that were not being properly treated.

Finally, almost nine months after her first meeting with his parents, the World Organisation Against Torture sent out the first international urgent appeal for Ilie's immediate release, guarantee of safety, fair legal representation, compensation and rehabilitation. By that time, Ludmila knew much more about his trauma in prison, including beatings and threats of rape, detention without food, water or access to a toilet, and completely inadequate medical assistance. He was also sentenced to 14 years in prison for unproven espionage.

The appeal prompted the Transnistrian government to transfer him to a "safer" prison that Ilie's mother was allowed to visit more regularly. She brought medicine provided by Memoria to her son, which gave Ludmila more ways to find out about his health. When the prison doctors gave him an "OK" health status but accepted medicine from Memoria, or did not accept medicine from Memoria even though he had tested positive for certain health problems, Ludmila had more evidence to prove that he was a victim of torture. One doctor even offered to pull out six or seven of his teeth because the prison medical unit did not have adequate facilities to deal with cavities.

Government authorities allowed Ilie to leave prison for proper dental treatment. At first Ludmila was overjoyed. Memoria and the World Organization Against Torture agreed to pay for the dental procedure. But a trusted person called her, pointing out that it would be better to bring an outside doctor to the prison than to take him out of prison for treatment where anyone could easily shoot him. He was, according to Transnistrian authorities, a dangerous criminal serving a 14-year sentence. They could use the excuse that he was trying to escape from prison and no one could prove them wrong.

Ludmila's investigations led to a follow-up appeal and a lot more publicity for the case. Ilie's mother told her that her son's prison guardians came to his cell and asked: "Why does Putin know about your teeth?" Moldovan and international media reacted in Ilie's favor to the appeals. Ludmila even read many Moldovan websites and newspapers, including a few from Transnistria, demanding his release from prison — in opposition to the region's official media. Some articles even insisted that Russian and Transnistrian authorities were manipulating the Cazac case. She felt so optimistic that she told his mother, "I think he will be released."

In the fall of 2011, over a year after she had met Ilie's parents, she picked up the phone in her office at Memoria and heard his father say, "He had two hours to take everything from the prison. He was just released."

Within a couple of days, Ilie himself appeared at Memoria, in pain, with dark circles under his eyes from lack of sleep. He said he was "so hopeful." After realizing that he was enough of a problem for Transnistrian authorities to be labeled a political prisoner, he learned to argue for his right to protection from violent prison criminals who threatened him. He also found the courage to refuse to sign a false confession that authorities tried to force on him.

Now he was euphoric. Moldovan authorities wanted to help him buy an apartment. The Czech Republic offered free hospital treatment. His life had completely turned around. He hugged and kissed Ludmila. "They're afraid of Memoria now," he said, thanking her for Memoria's help bringing justice for him and other political prisoners in Transnistria.

"Your name and Memoria's are like sunshine for the Tiraspol detainees now," Ilie beamed.

She was worried about the other detainees still in Tiraspol prison, their health, their morale, the progress of their cases in international court. And glad as she was to see Ilie free and so full of excitement, she suspected that his euphoria would not last.

One year later, after a clean bill of health from a Czech hospital, he returned to Memoria for psychological testing. He was working again and happy despite his lingering health problems, that he felt no need for further assistance.

"If you need something, please call me," said Ludmila, well aware that many of torture's after-effects, like depression and physical problems, emerged at least a year after the initial trauma ended.

Ilie did return to Memoria, depressed and worried about new physical pain. She and her psychologist colleague, Svetlana, designed a new plan for his long-term recovery, a process which Ludmila knew was subtle, complex and had to be tailored to each individual client.

April 2009

"Mom, are you coming to the protest?" Victor asked over the phone, while Ludmila was at work.

"I'm not feeling well," she said. "Please don't stay too long."

The Communists had somehow — possibly illegally — won the elections that everyone had predicted they would lose. Ludmila and her colleagues were somber yet anxious for what this would mean for their organization — the Communists wouldn't support their work and even had the general prosecutor try to punish lawyers who assisted Memoria's clients — and for their country. They wanted to join Victor and his generation as they protested in the streets, but just two months before, in a demonstration outside the general prosecutor's office, they had been attacked by provocateurs paid to disrupt the protest. The police stood idly by.

Later in the morning, one of Memoria's beneficiaries came to Ludmila's desk distraught. "Oh, my God, what's happening in the city center?"

The staff sat in her office, listening to a reporter chronicle the protest, his calm voice describing crowds in the plaza and around the nearby parliament building and presidential palace. "Wait, what's this? A fire truck! What are they doing?"

Ludmila tried calling Victor but couldn't reach him. She turned to her husband and Svetlana: "Let's go. Please. Together we can find him."

At the city center, they recognized opposition party politicians, including members of parliament from the Liberal Democratic Party, and the mayor of Chisinau. But only 100 meters away, smoke and debris spewed from the parliament building and presidential palace. The palace was covered with papers, stones, bricks and broken glass. People stood at the entrance, whistling, waving Moldovan flags, and attempting to smash the doors open with rocks.

She spotted a tall, thin, brown-haired student in a tan shirt on the main street. "Victor!" she called, waving her arms in the air.

As soon as he was near enough, he whispered: "Mom, I tried to help some young policemen escape a barrage of stones, but as soon as they'd gotten away, they started attacking students with batons."

They left as a sound like a blast came from behind them, scattering people in all directions as dark smoke billowed from where Ludmila had stood five minutes before.

Everyone knew mass arrests would begin shortly. Ludmila saw messages on social media of people looking for their loved ones: "I can't find my brother." "My friend has disappeared."

A few days later, the frowning prime minister announced on TV: "Parents, keep your children at home because we can use guns." President Voronin appeared too, threatening to arrest "everyone who participated in destroying the parliament and presidential palace — and everyone who protested."

Ludmila and Igor kept Victor house-bound, with their large Japanese mastiff standing guard in their front garden. Victor's image had been spotted in media coverage of the protests. They were relieved he was about to depart for the United States for an exchange program.

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Less than a week after the protests, two young men who had been arrested and then released came to Memoria with their lawyers. A few scars marked their necks and faces, and they sat cowering in their chairs, shoulders hunched, staring at the floor. Ludmila interviewed them separately.

"I never expected to be beaten," said the first. He and his friend had been in front of the university during a break between classes when a group of officers in plainclothes arrested them and drove them to a police station without explaining why. "But I was not beaten so badly. My friend, though, he was terribly beaten."

As he spoke, his face twisted with pain. He could not stop shaking as he described getting pushed out of the car, then forced to walk to the police station past a line of masked men who beat him and his friend using batons, heavy water bottles, and boot-kicks. Once in detention, they were refused water and access to a toilet. "I had dry mouth and asked for water. One of the policemen said, 'Ask your friend to make pee-pee.'"

The other young man told the same story, also feeling sorrier for his friend than for himself.

They are the same age as my son, was all Ludmila could think. After the interviews, she sat in her office and cried.

Three to five victims arrived daily at Memoria. By autumn, the center had registered 107 new beneficiaries, young men and women arrested by the police for involvement in the April protests. Most were beaten by masked men during their arrest. Once inside police stations, they were held in overcrowded cells or stuffed in the basements, garages or courtyards of the stations, where they were beaten, verbally abused, strip-searched and interrogated.

Ludmila led the first interviews with the center's newest clients and developed a checklist of questions for the staff to use when diagnosing and designing treatment. The clients' mothers, many of whom spent days in front of police stations begging for their children to be released, also came to Memoria asking for assistance. Ludmila and her staff were eager to help. She and some of her colleagues were parents too, with children at the university or in high school. They all worked with

the victims and their mothers during the workday. Afterwards, until late at night, Ludmila and Igor stayed at the center assisting the young peoples' lawyers, who had never worked with torture victims before. They counseled the lawyers and provided them with the only copies of the Istanbul Protocol[12] available in Moldova.

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In late August, Ludmila sat down in Memoria's blue-green psychotherapy office to interview a dark-haired young man, with a cast on one arm. His name was Sergiu Cretu. His lawyer brought him to the center after a long stay in the hospital. "He's very depressed and needs your help," the lawyer said.

"On the evening of April 8th, I was waiting for the bus with my sister," said Sergiu. They were on their way home when three men in plainclothes appeared, dragged him from the bus stop, and beat him with no explanation. They tied his hands behind his back, pushed him into a car and continued to beat him on the way to a police station. Once in detention, he was terrified. "I had no idea what was happening. I couldn't feel anything." Then enormous pain spread through his arm, which had become swollen and immobile. When he asked for medical help, he was beaten, then transferred to a metal cage.

During his interrogation, they asked why he was protesting. He said that he had been coming from the gym after doing taekwondo — he was not a political protester. They insisted that he show them an example of his sport. But he could not move his arm. Once again, he was beaten.

After a different policeman intervened to send him to a hospital, and a kind-hearted doctor ensured he was not sent back to the police station, Sergiu had surgery for the multiple fractures in his arm and then was released.

He now complained to Ludmila of headaches, vertigo, back pains and a tickling sensation in his arm. He had nightmares too, and was afraid to be outside by himself. He couldn't speak of his experiences without his hands shaking.

Memoria, with the financial assistance of the Switzerland section of Amnesty International, set to work rehabilitating Sergiu — mentally and physically — as the lawyers prepared a case against the police officer who abused him most brutally. The man started a public campaign on the internet trying to discredit Sergiu, saying he was faking his injuries to get money from the police.

Sergiu became more and more withdrawn and discontinued school, so Ludmila set to work: encouraging him to get back to taekwondo and playing guitar, his passions that were nearly taken away because of his broken arm; placing him on the Board of Memoria as a survivor, so he could tell his story and gain more confidence; and eventually asking him what he wanted from the case.

"I just want to hear him say: 'I'm sorry, Sergiu. I was wrong. I know that I am guilty.'"

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It was now Memoria's Christmas party, and Ludmila had gathered the center's board members and staff to celebrate.

With his two good arms and a new future, Sergiu pulled out his guitar and played Ludmila's favorite Moldovan folksong, *Omul Bun Si Pomul Copt*, "The Good Man and the Ripe Tree."

The good man and the tree with ripe fruit,
They both have no chance,
So they stand at road's edge,
The ripe fruit tree and the good man.

After they gave all they had,
Everyone walked away leaving them alone,
So they stand at road's edge,
The ripe fruit tree and the good man.

They are waiting for the time to pass,
Maybe they will bear fruit again,
For passersby, to come again,
To reach out their hands and ask.

The good man and the tree with ripe fruit,
They both have no chance,
So they stand at road's edge,
The ripe fruit tree and the good man.

A Sustainable Future

Ludmila could barely move. She and Igor had just returned from a short respite at the Black Sea, but now she had a fever, all of her muscles ached, painkillers weren't working, she was fatigued but couldn't stay in bed longer than a few minutes because of the pain in her back, she could only work a couple of hours a day. Medical specialists tested her, but could not figure out what it was.

For a year and half, Ludmila had been up from morning to midnight helping Memoria's long-term clients and newest beneficiaries — the young victims of political torture from April 2009 — who swelled the number of clients to 600. She was constantly under stress, worrying about her country, her family, her beneficiaries, her staff, her organization's financial problems.

She searched the internet and came across Chronic Pain Syndrome. It sounded like the complex pain that some of her beneficiaries were suffering: ongoing pain in many parts of the body at the same time, with the chronic nature of it causing fear, anger, depression and anxiety. It was difficult to diagnose. It was sometimes linked to post-traumatic stress disorder.

Ludmila realized her pain could be attributed to vicarious trauma — that people who help victims of trauma can develop emotional and physical problems similar to those they are treating. So she started paying more attention to her own needs, and gathered her staff to discuss the warning signs and encouraging positive communication, exercise programs, fun group activities, and anything they could do to relieve their stress.

She also sought outside help, from similar centers that treated victims of torture. Memoria was soon selected as a rehabilitation center that would receive training and education from the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT), an international NGO based in Minnesota. CVT sent three staff members to assist Memoria in strengthening its team in mental health, data collection and evaluation, and organizational development.

Their first recommendation: Memoria's director needed to work less.

They also sent some of the center's staff abroad to train more in specific areas (such as trauma therapy, English language skills, strategic planning). Crucially, they encouraged Ludmila to find a place where she could tell her story, rest, reflect, be away from the demands of her staff and beneficiaries. For her own healing, and so the organization could learn to be less dependent on her, and thus more sustainable.

Ludmila applied, was chosen, and went to San Diego to be a Woman PeaceMaker.

A CONVERSATION WITH LUDMILA POPOVICI

The following is an edited interview with IPJ Senior Program Officer Diana Kutlow on Oct. 16, 2012, with additions and clarifications based on interviews conducted by Alison Morse between Sept. 13 and Nov. 1, 2012.

Q: How many beneficiaries does Memoria currently have?

A: There are about 500 people on our working list from all the target groups, but we have a huge waiting list, about 700. We cannot assist all of them because of financial problems.

Q: You have said that similarities exist between the symptoms experienced by torture victims and soldiers who have been in war. What are some of the symptoms that you see?

A: Perpetrators of violence also experience PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder]. Different people's reactions to torture and violence may vary, but sometimes their reactions are similar, even though the conditions are different. That's why, in cases of PTSD, both victims and perpetrators may face deep depression. Some try to use alcohol to forget about traumatic past, but after trauma, all PTSD cases have very low alcohol tolerance. They are also very scared and face various kinds of anxiety. That's why it's very important to help all people who have suffered in military conflicts, including soldiers. In Moldova we have a lot of veterans of the Soviet-Afghan war. In fact, when I opened the center, I was thinking about how to help them, but there was no funding for such people. I decided to work with victims of political repression because we found the money for them.

Q: What legal problems do victims of torture face in Moldova?

A: It's very difficult for victims because the legal investigation of torture is very insufficient. State prosecutors work with other state institutions, like the Center for Forensic Medicine, where the medical forensic investigation of victims is superficial. Legal investigation of torture is not made according to international standards. That's why, in court, the files do not show clear evidence of torture and cases are closed at the investigation stage.

Q: Is that where Memoria can step in, with better investigations and medical records?

A: Yes. Our center is very focused on the medical investigation of torture. Our medical reports have not been accepted by state prosecutors or the Moldovan court, so we have helped our victims go to the European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg. In five cases, the decision by the European Court was made based on our medical documentation.

Q: Is this something that you think will change in the future? Will your evidence be accepted in Moldova?

A: Yes. Because after the *Taraburca v. Moldova* case [a case that the torture victim won in the European Court for Human Rights in 2011, using Memoria's medical documentation], the general

prosecutor's office was forced to change its approach and reopen some closed cases to make proper legal investigations.

Q: Are you seeing torture being used by any of the criminal organizations that are trafficking drugs and people?

A: I assisted two people who had been trafficked in the former Yugoslavia. Human trafficking is also a big problem in Moldova. But as I understand it, people from the police department are involved in trafficking in Moldova. We had some cases where former police had been arrested because they had been involved in the trafficking of drugs and human beings.

Q: What are you and Memoria doing to prevent torture from happening in Moldova?

A: Even if Memoria has very limited financial and human resources, we are trying to work very much on prevention. Since 2000, we have been working to help victims, but it is also important to work on preventing torture, through education.

We organize trainings for professionals like prosecutors, forensic doctors and judges from state institutions, and train all professional groups at the same time. That's why, after the traumatic events of 2009, I used nights and weekends to translate and edit the Istanbul Protocol into Romanian.

Q: What does the Istanbul Protocol do?

A: The Istanbul Protocol is a manual for the legal and medical investigation of torture. At Memoria, we understood that it was impossible to have a dialogue with state institutions without explaining to them what torture meant, what the consequences were and how to document everything. We needed to explain that we worked according to the Istanbul Protocol. That's why I decided to translate and edit it and to have enough copies for all the professionals in Moldova. So we found the money, and printed about 4,000 samples of the Istanbul Protocol in Romanian. All the professionals legally involved with torture victims receive it. All dialogues with representatives of state institutions start with these questions: "Did you receive a copy? Did you read it? If not, please read. After that, we will continue to discuss."

Q: You took an international instrument that Moldova had signed regarding torture, translated it and distributed it broadly. That seems like a very important step. Was that after the 2009 political unrest, when there had been many cases of torture?

A: Yes, because first we worked with the Istanbul Protocol in the English version. But in 2009, everyone needed to have copies on their desks because without having a clear instrument, it was difficult to work. Now, the legal framework in Moldova has changed, a little. The court has changed the definition of torture. They are now changing national legislation according to international instruments, to be able to better investigate cases of torture.

Q: You also have strong connections with international organizations. Which ones do you work with?

A: We survived thanks to our relations with international institutions, international NGOs, and IRCT, the International Rehabilitation Council for Victims. I was elected as a council member in 2002, and again, this year. Also, I developed good cooperation with OMCT, the World Organization Against Torture; with APT, the Association for the Prevention of Torture; the Office of the UN Rapporteur on Torture; and with the UN Voluntary Fund for Torture Victims — our main donor.

Q: Do you ever feel threatened, as an individual and as an organization?

A: In 2009, I asked for protection from the embassies of Germany and France in Moldova because I was very worried about the children of staff members. In fact, I locked my son in the house for two weeks in order to be able to work with victims. I was very happy when he won a scholarship to come to the United States to study in 2009. He was here so I was able to continue.

Q: The Communists were in power from 2001 to 2008, but you had this major political change in 2009, when the Communists and President Voronin were finally forced into opposition. But after 2009, Moldova did not have a president for a few years. How has that affected the policies of today?

A: After 2009, when Communists lost power, we had a long time, more than two years, of political instability because of the risks involved in having new elections. Parliament should elect a president but the democratic parties in Parliament needed one vote from the Communist party. That was why the Communists still felt very strong. Finally, some people from the Communist party decided to leave and become independent, which made it possible to vote for a president this spring. But this period was very unstable and uncertain. And the situation is still not so good. We have three democratic parties in power and sometimes they have problems with each other. The risk that Communists could come back to power in Moldova is still high. That's why people are still escaping from Moldova and are not planning to come back so soon.

Q: How much did the situation change from 2009, regarding your work?

A: It's very interesting because, even though power has changed, the Communists are still strong and are working in different institutions, so they want to keep the old rules. The new government wants to change things, but only at a high level. Now they are starting to reform the Ministry of Interior, but it's impossible to make reforms only by signing some papers or changing national legislation, without changing the mentality of people working in police stations.

Now our center is involved in another project, with UNICEF, monitoring minors in detention. I visited minors in detention in August, and I saw people tortured in April of this year. I was shocked because at the high level they are speaking very much about how to prevent, how to reduce, how to

combat torture, but what is happening in institutions is shocking. I think the problem is very complex.

Last year, I discussed the matter with a prosecutor. I asked, "Why are you so slow? We have 100 very well documented cases of torture by police at our center. Continue to investigate." He said, "Ludmila, the police are very well organized. You have 100 cases documented but hundreds of police participated." So even state institutions are sometimes not able to do something.

Step by step, they will take to court all the perpetrators in the cases from April 2009 because they are forced to do so by international institutions. A lot of police perpetrators will be punished anyway; they have already started to be punished. But for my staff and me, it's difficult now to go alone in the street, because many of the perpetrators are still working in some places.

Last week, I received a new message from the Ministry of the Interior asking for our opinion about how to change things. They also wanted our recommendations. It's very difficult to change the mentality of policemen who have worked for years in the same way. Daily, they used torture as an instrument. During the Communist period, police arrested people for stealing a telephone, tortured them, and forced them to confess to other crimes they did not commit, because police had a monthly quota of crimes they had to discover.

I remember, while I was working on one particular case, I wanted to understand what was happening in the police station, so my husband and I invited one of the policemen involved to a small restaurant for lunch. There, I asked him why this case was happening in his police station, how seemingly normal people could commit crimes such as torture. And he explained how the system in the police station worked. They had orders, they had monthly quotas, and they had older colleagues who pushed them, saying, "Oh, you don't know how to investigate. I will teach you." When I had gathered enough information and documented everything, I could convince people from the Ministry of the Interior and other institutions that we had to change this system together.

We still have these conditions in detention. We have a lot of people practically innocent who signed some papers. Now it's almost impossible for them to reopen their cases and defend their rights. I saw them. They are in detention, even minors. It's a very difficult problem and will not be changed simply by political will.

We came with a lot of proposals and recommendations for state institutions but it's very difficult for them to do something, probably because of a lack of clear information. For instance, I had a very surprising discussion in April of this year with the representative of the state Chancellery. He arranged a meeting with me at Memoria where he said, "Please, explain to me what UN CAT, the United Nations Convention Against Torture, means." He had no idea, and he was in charge of preparing the prime minister's visit to our center. So I spent half a day explaining it to him.

Other people from state institutions probably need more training and information, too. They have no idea but they are in some of the top positions. That's why, probably, the rehabilitation of torture

victims was not included in the dialogue between the European Union and Moldova this year. They spoke about prevention, about how to combat impunity, but they forgot to discuss — or totally ignored — the rehabilitation of torture survivors. So, this year, the rehabilitation of torture victims was excluded from the country-based program of the European Union for Moldova.

Two years ago, Amnesty International Moldova released a report: *Torture, It's Something Normal*. Now, after 2009, the mentality has changed a little. People understand what torture means and what torture is; they're speaking more about it. Journalists have become more interested, too. We are working a lot with them, helping them to understand this phenomenon.

In Moldova, we have to explain the phenomenon of torture, as well as individual cases, because this is the only way to change Moldovan perception. The only way. That's why we are very active at a local level. I participate in a lot of talk shows, discussions, debates and roundtables. We also involve beneficiaries in these media events so they can speak out about their stories and their problems. We have to educate people at all levels. But it's a big challenge for a small center with a small team like Memoria's to be so involved. Amnesty International Moldova and Promo-LEX are the only NGOs in our country who are working with us trying to do something. It's difficult.

Q: What are your wishes for your beneficiaries? What do you hope that Memoria's services can offer them in the long run?

A: In fact, our beneficiaries are helping us to survive and continue our activities, because when people are supported to rebuild their lives, some of them start to defend not only their rights but the rights of other people.

Q: They've become leaders in the fight against torture.

A: Yes. One example is a case from Transnistria. We helped a family very much. The son sought asylum in another European country but his mother decided to open an NGO, Mothers for Human Rights. I'm very happy to cooperate with them because now we have to help our people. It's very important for us to keep this cooperation with our beneficiaries because only together we can do something.

Q: There's a Romanian proverb that says: Adversity makes a man or a woman wise, not rich. What other rewards do you get from your work in spite of the dangers, in spite of the devastation of living with victims of torture every day? What makes you do it?

A: One day, into our center came a mother. She said, "I have a poem for you." I was surprised. After one year assisting her son, she came with poem for us. So, we have to continue. We can't stop. We have very good, very talented people among our beneficiaries. So we have to help them. They are helping us. It's important for us to have them as our friends.

We also need to help solve their problems, because sometimes they are lost, totally. For example, one lady had been tortured. She was very deeply depressed and attempted suicide. She said, "I'm zero. I can't continue my life. I can't look in the eyes of my daughter." I said, "But that was in the past. Let's look to the future, because you can do a lot of things." Now she's very well, she's in Germany with a new family. She's happy. I'm happy to have her on my list of friends, in my social network. We still communicate. Such cases are helpful for us.

I'm also working on a book of testimonies from recent victims of torture. Its title is *Broken Wings.* Our center released its first book, *Shattered Destinies,* in 2005, about victims of political repression; now we are working with recent victims. We use testimony therapy a lot — that's why we're encouraging beneficiaries to help edit this small new book project, *Broken Wings*, about young people who survived torture and continue their lives. We learn from our clients' dramatic and traumatic experiences so we can continue to help our people.

EXAMPLES OF BEST PRACTICES

Rehabilitation of Torture Survivors

STRATEGY	ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION (INCLUDING EXAMPLES)	PURPOSE
Creation of the rehabilitation center for survivors of torture at RCTV Memoria in Chisinau, Moldova.	Holistic and comprehensive rehabilitation services for torture survivors.	Each beneficiary's rehabilitation program is approached holistically to treat all the effects and after-effects of suffered torture. Each beneficiary receives continuous medical, psychological, social and legal assistance. They also become more socially active, with involvement in clubs of interest, art therapy, exhibitions, informative meetings and excursions.	To improve the physical and mental status of each beneficiary; to reintegrate the individual into her/his family and society; to restore self-esteem; and to recognize the individual's suffering.
	Medical documentation for beneficiaries and their lawyers	More than 100 cases were documented for national courts as well as for the European Court for Human Rights, according to Istanbul Protocol.	To secure justice for beneficiaries in order to the restore truth, justice and peace to them, their families and society.

	External references	A system used for additional medical consultations, diagnostic investigations and specialized treatment, under contract with a state medical clinic.	To make sure that beneficiaries' medical reports are accurate and in depth enough to ensure proper treatment and provide legal evidence of torture.
	Free medication	The center compensates beneficiaries for their medication	To ensure that beneficiaries have continued access to proper medication, regardless of their economic status.
	Continued communication	Phone calls, email, social media and in-person meetings between staff and beneficiaries based on trust and results.	To allow beneficiaries to feel connected and able to ask for help at critical moments.
	International collaborations with other rehabilitation centers for torture survivors.	Four-year collaborative project with the Center for Victims of Torture in Minnesota.	To improve Memoria's mental health services, as well as monitoring and evaluation techniques, and developing as an organization.
Regional and international sharing of experience in rehabilitation of torture survivors	Author of "Ill-treatment and Torture, After-Effects and Aid": guidelines for rehabilitation of Victims of Torture, inhuman treatment	A handbook for service providers, family members and victims of torture	To improve the physical and psychological status of torture survivors and their families and to help in their healing process.

	and various forms of violence, as well as their relatives.		

TORTURE PREVENTION

STRATEGY	ACTIVITIES	DESCRIPTION (INCLUDING EXAMPLES)	PURPOSE
Work with minors in detention	"A Better Life for Minors in Detention," a project at two prisons in Moldova.	Implemented in 2006-7, the project focused on psychosocial support, trainings, educational support, completion of a library, the use of a gym, creation of clubs of interests, and development of hobbies for children in detention and professionals in penitentiaries.	About 200 children from detention and 16 professionals benefited from support and trainings in order to diminish the destructive effects of detention, to secure non-violent communication, to increase abilities of children for post-detention period and to prevent ill-treatment and torture.
Building of public awareness	Participation in yearly events to commemorate June 26th, the UN Day in Support of Torture Victims.	Involvement in public events, concerts, appeals, press conferences and meetings; organization of roundtables where beneficiaries can share their stories with each other and the public.	To educate journalists, the public and potential beneficiaries, and to promote a society without torture.
	Training and cooperation with journalists.	Participation in interviews, talk shows and debates.	

	Editing anthologies of testimonials by torture survivors.	Editing of the book *Shattered Destinies*, a compilation of stories by Memoria's beneficiaries who were victims of Soviet political torture. Published in Romanian and English.	
Training of professionals from other institutions: prosecutors, judges, lawyers, medical and forensic doctors, and other relevant actors.	Translation into Romanian and printing of the Istanbul Protocol.	The Istanbul Protocol, the UN manual of effective investigation and documentation of torture, was translated and edited into clear, concise Romanian. 4,000 copies were printed and made available for all relevant professionals and students.	To help train relevant professionals on the international guidelines for defining and investigating torture, and to hold them accountable to those guidelines.
	Organization of seminars, workshops and roundtables that define torture, its roots, its use in Moldova, and legal ways to stop and prevent it.	Seminar for police focused on consequences for perpetrators. Seminars on the presentation and implementation of the Istanbul Protocol.	To help train relevant professionals on the international guidelines for defining and investigating torture, and to hold them accountable to those guidelines. Also, to help relevant professionals understand the roots of torture and how to prevent it.

		Roundtable discussion: Implementation of the UN Convention Against Torture in the Republic of Moldova.	
	Lectures for other organizations	Expert for seminar "International Law, Standards and Guidelines for Prevention of Torture and Inhuman Treatment, and Assistance of Victims".	To train local leaders from Russian NGOs in assistance, documentation and prevention of torture and violence toward soldiers in the Russian Army.
	Creation of guidelines and basic studies.	Co-authored guidelines for local committees to monitor places of detention.	To help train relevant professionals in the guidelines for defining and investigating torture, and to hold them accountable to those guidelines.
Networking and cooperation	Support and work with Moldovan NGOs.	Joint events, common agendas for local campaigns, legal assistance and medical evidence for local NGOs including Amnesty International Moldova; Promolex, Mothers for Human Rights; Institute for HR; and the Legal Resources Centre, among others.	To keep up local cooperation in support of torture survivors, to secure justice for them and to educate state representatives.

	Support and work with international NGOs.	Joint conferences and networking with Memoria's main partners abroad: 1) International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims. 2) World Organization Against Torture; 3) Center for Victims of Torture; 4) ICAR Foundation 5) European Network of Rehabilitation Centers and Programs.	To give and receive international support and education in order to secure justice and the best treatment possible for Moldovan torture survivors.

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BIOGRAPHY OF A PEACE WRITER — Alison Morse

Alison Morse is a freelance writer and educator. She received her MFA from Hamline University in St. Paul, Minn., where her thesis, a novel-in-progress about the war in the former Yugoslavia, won the Outstanding Thesis Award. Her articles, short stories and poetry have been published widely in print and online. She also teaches ELL to adult immigrants from all over the world and is a passionate advocate for immigrant rights.

Writing is Morse's second career. For 20 years prior, she was an animator for documentary, artistic and commercial projects and a teacher of animation. Wanting to express the content most meaningful to her with the least amount of technical interference, she turned from moving images to words. Now she uses character, setting, plot and narrative time — tools familiar to her as an animator — to tell stories that promote peacebuilding and human empowerment. In 2011, Morse worked as a peace writer with Woman PeaceMaker Wahu Kaara of Kenya and wrote the narrative "The Strength of Mothers."

JOAN B. KROC INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE
at the University of San Diego's Kroc School of Peace Studies

The mission of the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice (IPJ), based at the University of San Diego's Kroc School of Peace Studies, is to foster peace, cultivate justice and create a safer world. The IPJ was established in 2000 through a generous gift from the late Joan B. Kroc to the university to create an institute for the study and practice of peace and justice.

The institute strives, in Joan B. Kroc's words, to not only talk about peace, but also make peace. In its peacebuilding initiatives in places like Nepal and Kenya, the IPJ works with local partners to help strengthen their efforts to consolidate peace with justice in the communities in which they live. In addition to the Women PeaceMakers Program, the institute is home to the Joan B. Kroc Distinguished Lecture Series and WorldLink Program, and produces several publications in the fields of peace and justice.

ENDNOTES

[1] A version of this paragraph first appeared in the article "'Women Cannot Cry Anymore': Global Voices Transforming Violent Conflict," by Emiko Noma in *Critical Half*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2007). Copyright 2007 Women for Women International.

[2] GULAG, or GULag, is the acronym for the Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps and Colonies, the organization that oversaw the Soviet Union's forced labor camps and prisons for dissidents during the Stalinist era. Throughout the story it will be written as gulag.

[3] A *kolkhoz* was a communist farming collective. There were many kolkhozy throughout Moldova during the Soviet occupation. Each kolkhoz was divided into three to four brigades, which had a certain number of people, equipment, land and animals.

[4] A pioneer camp was for children in the communist party as well as for the members of the children's brigade. Communist children up to age 14 were called pioneers.

[5] ICAR is the name of the Medical Rehabilitation Centers for Victims of Torture in Romania.

[6] Nicolae Ceausecu was Romania's last communist leader. He ruled the country from 1967 to 1989. His leadership was marked by brutal repressiveness.

[7] A commissar in this case has a position much like a district police commissioner.

[8] Article 14 of the UN Convention Against Torture states, "… each State Party shall ensure in its legal system that the victim of an act of torture obtains redress and has an enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation including the means for as full rehabilitation as possible. In the event of the death of the victim as a result of an act of torture, his dependents shall be entitled to compensation. Nothing in this article shall affect any right of the victim or other person to compensation which may exist under national law."

[9] Article 1 of the UN Convention Against Torture defines torture as, "Any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person, information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent in or incidental to lawful sanctions."

[10] Transnistria is a small eastern region of Moldova, separated from the western part by the Dneister River. The region has its own government and is recognized as a separate country by Russia, its close ally. The capital is Tiraspol.

[11] The 2009 elections and their aftermath are detailed in the following story, "April 2009."

[12] The UN's guidelines for investigation and documentation of torture.