

FACING THE FUTURE

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1. On Guilt, Truth and Reconciliation

First Prize: Srđan Milošević

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2. Inter-Religious Dialogue as a Mean for Reconciliation

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FACING THE FUTURE

ON GUILT, TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AS A MEAN FOR
RECONCILIATION

Belgrade, July 2006

PREFACE

During November 2005 and April 2006, the OSCE Mission to Serbia and Montenegro, together with the European Movement of Serbia and the Serbian Students Union organized discussion panels with students and prominent young leaders in all Serbian University Cities¹ on how to “Face the Future”. The aim was to stimulate young people to think about and express² their views on the importance of facing the recent past, to acknowledge legal, political and moral responsibility as a precondition for the integration of society in a union of democratic European countries and to promote democratic values, tolerance and a society without discrimination.

As part of the same project, young people were invited to write essays “On Guilt, Truth and Change in Serbia” and “Interfaith Dialogue as a Means for Reconciliation” to accompany the discussions held at the university centres.

During the panel discussions the participants showed a very strong orientation towards the future: their aspirations, wishes for their individual lives and hopes for the country. The young essay authors also contemplated the past, stressing the fact that facing the past is a traumatic experience for all societies and is left to all citizens of this country as heritage. The students called for objectivity in research and presentation of the past instead of blindly trusting false patriots. They also pointed out that not only do they have the right to know about the past but consider it a responsibility to know.

Many argued that inter-religious dialogue presupposes demonopolization of truth, self criticism and consciousness about our own prejudices. The essay authors do not want Serbian society to become a closed community, sceptical and intolerant towards all that is different. The authors write about the role of

1) Belgrade, Novi Pazar, Nis, Novi Sad, Kragujevac and Subotica.

2) The ideas, messages, fears and hopes of the authors are their own, and do not reflect the OSCE's views and standpoints. The OSCE only provided a space for discussion.

religion in history and invite religious communities to contribute to reconciliation. Many argue that diversity does not separate but that values, on which all religions are based, may enrich and lead the society forward.

One of the messages of the essays is that our future is in the European Union not only because the living conditions it may provide are better, but also because in the EU, there are rules, norms and values which are necessary and without which Serbia cannot progress.

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**ON GUILT, TRUTH
AND RECONCILIATION**

Isidora Đorđević

Serbia in the nineties: wars, isolation, sanctions, poverty, crimes without culprits and names, fears, frustrations; Serbia – a moral and political ruin. Nowadays, fifteen years after, the question arises relating to what has been essentially changed in Serbia and how much we have changed, the question whether and to what extent we are actually isolated, whether we still fear, or feel weak, desperate and frustrated, and whether we are troubled with suspense. Apart from all this there comes fatigue, as the result of waiting without the prospect of an end or goal. There is no change before the truth. The space for implementation of overall changes is possible to conquer only if we have previously understood all aspects of truth, which is always one.

First, I would like to point out a strong cause and effect connection between **guilt, truth and change**. After crimes were committed, it is necessary that truth be established and awakened, by facing the facts and accepting the responsibility and guilt as the only way to a deep, radical and final change. The very purpose of this paper was actually pointing out the necessity of facing the events from the recent past, which, unfortunately, we either witnessed or took part in. Have we experienced an authentic feeling of facing the truth or have we only converted the committed crimes to the acceptable form for our conscience, failing to catch the opportunity for changes?

An objective, unbiased look back over our shoulders is our commitment, to the same extent as our right and responsibility to our own life and lives of other people. It is impossible to make these three painful steps without a mature and firm decision; we will still be their prisoners. Therefore all of us must take part in this process, starting from soul-searching. If we don't face these crimes then we create the possibility of repeating them. We shouldn't give it another chance. Let's prevent it from repeating.

The logical, legal and ethical groundlessness of the expressions *collective responsibility and guilt* needs to be pointed out,

so that the process of facing the past can rest on the grounds of reality. We cannot and must not feel guilty for crimes in which we never took part and which were made without our will, knowledge and possibility to stop them. On the other hand, both dimensions of responsibility are present – individual and collective – for creating a spiritual ambient, social environment and intellectual climate. This is then suitable for the process of defining and establishing responsibility, identifying and sanctioning culprits and intentions to present the truth with arguments to those having been deprived of it due to subjective or objective reasons. Facing the fact that some of the crimes were done in the name of larger or smaller social and political communities, even in the name of a whole nation, is a rather delicate task. An integral part of every adequate change is presenting groundlessness and impossibility of the attempt to equal the crime's perpetrators with the whole nation. By keeping our mouths shut, we ourselves commit the crime of keeping silent, in relation to crimes and their perpetrators and also by hiding and not facing them. We have no right to keep quiet, to deny and forget these crimes. Facing these crimes is the only way to feel cleansed and only in such a manner can we plan our future without the guilt, the remains of the past and ghosts of perpetrators.

Trying to make an unbiased view of changes in our society, I face the fact that a considerable number of the protagonists in our public life are actually yesterday's and often today's men of power, the same ones who encouraged the war by voicing the hatred, convincing us that we lived in the most beautiful and only reality. Today they are our present again, passing us the same messages but in a more sophisticated and implicit form, messages rich in new passions and intolerance. In order to avoid oblivion as a form of participation in crime, our obligation is to point out that everything that starts with voicing of hatred and intolerance ends in physical violence.

Unfortunately, yesterday's warriors against certain models of behavior characteristic of that dark period have adopted these models. Nowadays those in charge of making decisions and establishing guilt and encouraging the process of facing truth and taking responsibility have done the same. Those who used to point to the significance of fighting against corruption and to fatal con-

sequences of employing people on the basis of being a member of certain political parties or acceptability of ideological orientation, are driven with these criteria today. On the other hand, certain (but not sufficient) changes in the field of media freedom have taken place. I have the impression that today there are no untouchables anymore, but most scandals do not end in court, culprits do not take the responsibility for committed crimes, and they continue to appear in public and perform public functions without shame. The abovementioned results in the increased level of resistance of the public to crimes and criminal acts.

The basic precondition for implementing necessary changes is the transition of the whole system of values in all aspects and in all levels of life; we only multiply the problems by acting in surface layers without touching the essence. The present system of values didn't undergo a radical break up with the previous and devastating ones, on whose basis it was created. Of course, we are encouraged with the fact that certain changes have taken place, leaving no possibility of returning to the previous state of things in certain fields of life. When speaking of the achieved aspects of changes worthy of our attention, it is necessary that a more intensive international exchange of contents in fields of science, art and culture be stressed, as well as more opportunities to be hosts to representatives of these fields as a country, which in the 21st century is a significant step for the integration of a country in contemporary world trends. Achieved individual changes increase the level of the individual and collective obligation to finally get rid of the remains of the past. Above all it is necessary that we build a real and questionable picture of our own values, cherishing self-respect, as well as perfect insight into our own faults, deficiencies, and fatal actions made in the past by individuals. This is the only way to avoid living the unreal picture of ourselves and being distanced, isolated and uninformed, creating unreal presentations of our own significance and dimensions.

If we keep quiet for a moment, close our eyes and do not act openly and unambiguously, pointing out our rejection to accept our participation in crimes, we will actually support these crimes and make new ones at the same time. A crime may be, and is usually initiated from "higher instances", but its implementation

depends on the support of a critical number of citizens. If there was no such support, there would be no possibility of committing a crime. Our responsibility and obligation, and also power in this respect is great. Let's use it in the most efficient way for the purpose of our past, present and future. For the purpose of establishing guilt, facing the truth and making a change.

Abusara Adel

In almost each of the last fifteen years, Serbia experienced, and was described as being in, the "year of the final outcome," in which the Gordian knot of all its problems, starting from the least to the most serious, would be resolved in this or that manner, first by addressing the issue of staying on the world map and then by addressing the problems of its micro-environment.

However, it is only in the last several years that we have heard the voices of those who think that the key to exit from that, historically short, but for us who lived it, infinite period of time, is to face ourselves, i.e. to face everything that has happened. "Let's face our past in order to start towards our future" – apparently a simple and easily acceptable slogan, bears the idea of a deep change of the society from its roots, the idea of awakening from a dream, nightmares of nationalistic screams, sounds of weapons, blood, meaningless deaths, faces distorted with suffering... How can Serbia be "awakened"? Without the intention to claim the exclusivity of my ideas, I think that two ideas are critical and I will pay full credit to them: the first one refers to the fact that everything that happened *must not be forgotten*, and the other one refers to the fact that we should get to know *who* will accept things that happened in the best possible manner and who will in time become the bearer of the country's "becoming aware again" and consequently the bearer of its "renaissance".

"The burden of silence" (Janja Bec) and/or "hiding dust under the carpet" is a typical behavioral pattern of each society that has been through a similar unfortunate experience in its history. The Serbian example is more complicated though because it underwent a period of denial of any crime being done by its part. This period ended recently when unquestionable evidence has been given to the public stating that "each side has committed crimes", to use a euphemism that some people use to express their confession of crimes. The present political moment, the death of the last creator of bloody wars of the Balkans at the end

of the 20th century, suits well those whose wish is to put everything *ad acta*. However, it is also excellent for starting a painful and necessary story referring to the reasons of Serbia's participation in these wars, the story of misguided goals, inverted categories of national interests, the fatal story of equating the state's and national interests, and above all, the story of crimes committed in the name of the abovementioned. Therefore, I do not agree with the thesis that it is necessary to wait for a time when we will be able to accept the period of crisis without emotions and that we will be unbiased, since that would mean something written by Timothy Garton Ash – namely, oblivion, the death of witnesses, no victims and their families' satisfaction, and the possibility of a later politicization of the tragedy... We must not allow this to happen because of others, above all because of ourselves.

However, less numerous Serbian "warriors of the cross" cannot spread the truth alone and therefore they cannot be convincing enough. It is necessary to "build up" the whole generation of those who will be capable of realizing first by themselves, and then by explaining to others the reasons and consequences of a moral decline in the nineties.

The question, however, is whether all people in this country feel ready to accept a completely different way of seeing the current reality in comparison to the previous one? I think the answer is a negative one, due to different reasons, depending on a specific group we are talking about. First of all, the terms "guilt", "tolerance", and "reconciliation" are hardly acceptable to those who lost someone or something (for example their property) in wars. The absoluteness of their tragedy in a great number of cases makes them see *someone else* as the culprit, easily identified in an opposing nation or religion (these two terms were almost always directly connected in the Balkans). Here we have few opportunities for individualization and for any attempt to make the hatred meaningless. On the other hand, now it is difficult to convince those who supported the politics that prevailed in Serbia for years, to change their rooted attitudes. The reasons for their "stubbornness", for example "years of brainwashing" or deeply rooted principles, or perhaps "shame", would not be important enough to support this idea. Those who will easily accept reconciliation as the result of the process of "setting one-

self free" from the burden of the past are, actually, *the youth*. Taking into account the age and educational structure of the country, it becomes clear that a rather dangerous and unfortunately chosen thesis of "two halves of Serbia", existing since the 5th of October changes, might make sense. The "half" consisting of people who participated a little or didn't participate at all in the cataclysm will be able to distance themselves from it decisively, and in the example of their parents realizing the meaningfulness and the absurdity of making wars and killing another human being without reason. That half will (and already has) be able to overcome differences separating the Croats, Bosnians and Serbs. Though controversial and often used in contemporary writings in this field, comparisons with Germany are suitable in this context in respect to its distancing from Nazism and the terrors it brought. It was only in the elevation of the generation of '68 that a real reconciliation of Germans with themselves and acceptance of their nation's participation in history came about! Of course, I hope and expect that we will not need twenty years and that the next generation will make this radical change, and that Serbian youth of today will be able to understand the significance of its role and the present moment. On one hand, this generation does not have a problem with the unsuccessful idea of *Yugoslavism*, the antipodes of which are nationalism and chauvinism, while on the other it is witness to the catastrophe that such nationalism caused. That is why they will be able to see a man in a boy of same age who is a Croat or Bosnian, having the same problems: lack of money, the same attempts to find their place under the sun, and to realize that there are more things connecting them than those separating them.

The presumption of this whole conception, taking a more complex stance, is that this entire generation needs to be educated and cherished in order to go in the right direction. The role of political elites and civil society is necessary here and they should do their best in order to not falsify history in the future, to accept all events and the role of Serbia under Milosevic (and with themselves). In this way it can be made sure that younger generations develop a level of critical consciousness necessary in order to face ourselves. If politicians cannot do so (and to a great extent they are unable to do this because of the burden of the past), we

need to pressure those I labeled “the warriors of the cross.” In this respect, this essay competition makes good sense.

A relatively quick success of this idea does not depend exclusively on determinants found in this paper, but on many other things we cannot influence. The manner in which the world is going to support Serbia (or not) in its attempts to get rid of a “nightmare” is important. We must not neglect the processes taking place in other countries who took part in wars. Possibly the greatest significance should be placed on political issues that must be solved this year and which are related to the future status and appearance of Serbia. However, I think that something that stimulates optimism, which is not simply the product of my youth, is actually the fact that it is a reversible process – the issue is not whether we will get rid of the burden of the past. The issue is *when* will we do this?

Marijana Aracki

Every period has its problems. To the more fortunate their forefathers left at least a chance to rise as high as their spiritual wings are able to take them; a chance to instill a sense of significance into their lives. Our forefathers probably were not even able to fathom what was in store for their future generations, or were just simply not able to cope with all the evil spirits of their own times. Whatever the case, this difficult, but by no means overbearing task of first facing our past, however painful it may be, and then, having survived the catharsis, clean and fresh, turning toward a brighter future in which we shall finally have the chance to create a basis for a normal life, for ourselves, and our children, is now left to us.

As long as there is the energy, will and persistence, there is no problem without a solution, no goal without realization. This means tireless work, first to better ourselves, but also with “struggle” as the word of the day, since it is only this that can stop us as a nation from (again) falling into hibernation, in vain waiting for a new Sutter, who would, overnight, rescue us from the mire bogging us down for over a decade.

By turning a blind eye to problems, which is basically what we are presently doing, we are no further away from them. Quite the contrary! They are closing in on us from all sides, geographically, but also in all other respects, threatening to engulf us in the near future, unless we engulf them. Thus, we must face them, and as soon as possible, while we have at least some little strength left after our endless scurrying to escape the danger. One never knows – once when we stop and turn around – it may be that the problems will run away from us, if we have truth on our side.

The first, and unavoidable step forward in the dire process of facing the past implies that all crimes committed in the region of the former SFRY must finally be attributed a name and a surname, in order to avoid collective guilt, and to do justice.

However, before all this, it is indispensable to not only solve the problem of the judiciary and of the legal system as a whole, but also of all other systems in our society. This means to win the fight against corruption, and against party (and not only party) nepotism, since only then shall we be able to speak of justice as such. The fact that the individual is not punished for breaking the law speaks on its own, primarily about the character of social institutions, but also of the very society, and of moral values nurtured within it. Another source of problems exists within the judiciary system, as well as in the army, the police, the health care system, the system of education, and in basically in all walks of our society. This is the unfavorable economic situation, which has resulted not only in a lack of technical equipment in these institutions, but also presents a real challenge for all those individuals suffering various pressures, whose moral norms have been put to the test. Therefore, the creating of basic conditions for a normal life shall create also the basic preconditions for normal work and functioning of all institutions.

In relevance to the above, it is mandatory (following the practice established by countries that have gone down the thorny road of transition from an authoritarian to a democratic society) to continue to form the so called "Committee for Truth and Reconciliation", with the task to elucidate the truth of the events from our immediate past, and to assist the judicial system in solving the problem. For such a committee to survive (unlike the Committee for Truth and Reconciliation that was formed after the fall of the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, and that quickly ceased to exist due to lack of consensus pertaining to goals for which it had been formed), it is indispensable to engage the cultural elite within our society to publicly discuss results of its activities, which would also, to a certain extent, awaken the awareness of the people, since any attempt to impose anything externally cannot lead to a sincere acceptance of responsibility.

After all such preconditions are formed, the long and painful process that must follow is sure to alarm all those minds always ready for the hate which seems never to subside in the mountainous Balkans, and always ready to fling another spark into the already overflowing powder keg. However it is a process that will finally put an end to a dark age in our history. To make

all this possible (to make individuals take on responsibility for their criminal acts), it is indispensable to possess a considerable dose of objectivity, which can be achieved only and solely with the assistance from a public that must see victims, including all their affiliations, political, religious, and national, as human beings. A victim has an identity and must be able to use the media to present his or her story, and so to obtain not only gratification (if this is at all possible), but also the chance to recover his or her own dignity. Like the victim, the criminal is also an individual, who if proven guilty, must be justly punished, which will represent the final triumph of good over evil, and which will in the long run – we hope – extinguish the desire for revenge, and bring about the reconciliation and forgiveness that are so needed. Thus, the slow, but still attainable, justice will also bring stability, both social and economic, as a possibility to at last channel our potentials toward the present and the future.

However, once we face the future, we also face new problems. "In this country you must always run as fast as you can in order not to remain in one spot," wrote Lewis Carroll in "Alice in Wonderland". It is as if he were speaking of Serbia. Therefore, we must all put in a tremendous effort to make even that smallest step, but in that step move forward. After all the time lost in vain, busted, wasted, and by all means lagging behind in development, we are facing the phenomenon of the "World Cup", offering us not only the possibility to play the game of life with the rest of the world, but also demanding strict discipline and daily workouts, which is something we are not used to. Still, any missed chance is a luxury we have offered ourselves for far too long. We have been on the sidelines long enough.

The cruel reality we face daily, which as time goes by is reminding us more and more of a "Twilight Zone" with no way out, without a doubt seems discouraging to us all. We need to look around and realize the many issues we need to challenge - corruption, criminal, affairs, senseless hatred, and even more senseless xenophobia. Naturally, it is easiest to despair and give in to depression while life is passing us by. We must stir, right now and instantly, awaken from lethargy, as a nation and as individuals, and become active in finding solutions to problems if we don't want our lives to be designed by others. Unless we do so,

we shall have no one to blame but ourselves. Life – is there a better motivation?

In the race toward a better tomorrow, we have one more obligation, to teach those with retrograde minds that by joining the world we are not traitors set to oust the national symbol, but quite the contrary, that we bring it into the light of day for others to see, while by a continued isolation we remain in the dark, alone.

Marko Banković

The dictionary definition of truth reads: the quality or state of being true; the quality of being in accordance with reality; reality, actual existence. Guilt is defined as: a painful feeling of self reproach resulting from a belief that one has done something wrong or immoral, while change is defined as: a broad general term with the sense of becoming different, altering, transforming, converting, undergoing variation. Still, regardless of such, apparently quite clear definitions, the question must be asked what these concepts mean in Serbia today. The answer to this question, as well as to the question of what these concepts should mean in a future, better Serbia, along with a suggestion on how to achieve such a Serbia, will be presented in this paper.

The precondition for all change, including the reform of Serbia, is facing the truth. Unfortunately, in Serbia it is hard to clearly define truth, because here and now a war is being waged between several “truths“. Namely, what one sees as his “truth“ depends to a large extent on his point of view, on the direction he is looking in, and the moment when he (on purpose, or by chance) turns his gaze in some other direction. For these reasons, there are completely opposing “truths“ about practically all of the contemporary histories of this region. Varying viewpoints about who started the war, who is to blame for sanctions being imposed, who wishes Serbia only the best, and who is a traitor, are just some of the general issues present on our political scene in the last fifteen years. Which can be used to illustrate the existence of opposing “truths“? Serbia was often very craftily pointed in a certain direction, simply by a positioning the camera, all the while forgetting (filled with emotions, or on purpose) that there are also other angles, and other components of the comprehensive image of reality, regardless of whether it corresponds to our desires and ideas about it or not. And this is exactly how our image of the world we live in should look: complete, from various perspectives, and objective. Instead, information should only be the starting point for analyzing and comparing in order to

reach the whole truth on what in fact happened, or is happening. This is taken to be the whole accepted or rejected “truth”, depending on its agreement with a previously defined standpoint about that given subject. And this is exactly the key to the problem: people need to be educated on how to use information, how to analyze it, and discover manipulation, i.e. how to use different (often contradictory) information to compose a comprehensive image – the truth.

Only when the whole truth is reached, can the individual (as well as the entire nation) begin to face it. By learning everything about the world we live in, we also learn everything about ourselves as individuals and as a nation, about our good, but also about our bad sides. The good sides give rise to a feeling of pride, and the bad to a feeling of guilt. Accepting one’s own guilt is a very difficult and uneasy process, but it also has a cathartic quality. It enables you to look at yourself in the mirror, completely aware of your good and bad sides, ready to accept responsibility for your own acts, with the lesson that this will not be repeated ever again. There is no need for a judge, a prosecutor, for prosecution – each person is his own best prosecutor and the most objective of judges (provided that he is prepared to go all the way in facing the past). The verdict he passes on himself is not a single act, but also a remedy and assurance that something similar will never happen again.

Unfortunately, this is a description of an imaginary Serbia. In the real Serbia, maybe also because many require of her to feel guilty, guilt is not taken as purification, as something that comes from within, but as a request that needs to be fulfilled, as something coming from the outside. For this reason, it is either rejected in any form, or just as uncritically accepted. On one side, there is the view that Serbia and Serbs are not, and cannot be guilty of anything, including participation in wars, the economic crisis, and the bad international position. Guilt is most often transferred to someone else, to world powers, to the previous government, or to sanctions. On the other side, there are opinions that the Serbian people are guilty and must be punished for all evils from the past. In turn guilt is accepted for everything (more often than not, speaking in the third, instead of first person) they have been accused of (even to the point that there are

opinions that the assassination of the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ana Lind, is the act of an emotionally unstable individual of Serbian origin, and only one more product of the criminal nature of the Serbian people). A common denominator of the two attitudes is that both are externally motivated, and that neither of them leads in the direction of a real solution to problems that Serbia is facing. In addition, guilt should not be linked only to crimes. If we knew that crimes were being committed, but did nothing to prevent them, we must admit that we too are responsible. However, we must also admit our responsibility for all that others did to us, since if we as people were victims of genocide several times in the past. In the eyes of the world we became genocidal, and turned a favored into a hated state, there must be guilt of our own there, because we should have been wiser and more methodical.

The standstill that can presently be felt in changes initiated in 2000 is but a consequence of the fact that October 5th never happened in the minds of people. Since then, the process of facing the truth and confessing guilt never took place in Serbia; it has not been possible to implement real, complete changes. In Serbia, change is still felt as a forced phenomenon, resulting from dissatisfaction with a certain state of affairs, or from external factors. It is then defined as a change of the present status, with no clear plan of where it is going, nor any real goal. Changes are abrupt and often represent a complete alteration of previous points of view, no moral is drawn from mistakes, but rather one heads for new mistakes. This is done without any deep, essential change emanating from individuals - the kind that would be directed to changing that which was not good. Rather, changes are externally motivated: the impossibility of standing a certain state any longer, personal gain (numerous. “butterflies“ ... members of parties of the former regime who joined democratic parties after 5th October), pressure (from the EU, the Hague Tribunal, or other international organizations), conformism, or the quality of being fashionable.

In order to achieve a Serbia in which change will be defined not as the change of the current status, but as an aspiration to a better status, a Serbia in which change is understood as a product of the cathartic act of learning the truth. With a clear vision of

the goal, and a realistic insight into how the process of change will take place (including the difficulties it will bring). We must first take a good look at our past, face our past, because the extent to which we do this will condition the extent to which we will be able to see what our future will look like. Only such a changed Serbia, which has faced its past and its responsibility, will be able to become a part of the European family, and not of the mythological Europe that is the solution to all our troubles. We look for a real Europe, in which we will, as in a marriage, be equal in sharing the good and the bad, a Europe in which we will be respected and in which we will respect others, a Europe ready to face its own history, to take on guilt (among other things, also for how it had wronged us), and to change in order to become better.

Marko Tasić

October 2005. A historical month for Serbia. The achievement of the only uniform goal, in respect of which citizens and politicians shared undivided compliance, took place five years after unforced democratic revolution: the beginning of negotiations for the accession to the European Union. Because of so many years of isolation, constant wars and unbearable poverty, there were few who had the courage to take into a serious consideration such an orientation. The conditions were already known: strengthening legal institutions, increasing production and cutting down on misuse. Our country, as well as the countries of former Yugoslavia, had an additional condition: facing the crimes of the recent past. However, the main forces of the pro-European community were directed towards removing the existing regime, so that a true democratization of the society could bring the country back to the continent. As a result there were no serious public disputes, something the orientation towards Europe and its means of accomplishment actually presume. This is especially true on manners of overcoming a gap between the reality of a country almost without the protection of human rights and a destroyed economy, and transforming it into a preferable full member of the most developed community of nations in the world.

The Serbian Government started the negotiations almost unprepared for providing state institutions and the economy conditions necessary in the process of connecting to the European Union. Sometimes the government was sincerely surprised with the requests of foreign diplomats that more needed to be done in respect of facing the past, as well as in the governments of neighboring countries. This negligence caused only harm, especially to our country. Difficulties were numerous; therefore due attention wasn't paid to the beginning of negotiations. The Constitution, Kosovo issue, relationships with Montenegro were above negotiating parties. Once again the difficulties of the territory of southeast Europe, especially its western

part, have never produced a winner's sigh of relief because of the achieved political progress. It became obvious that these results were the only necessary steps for meeting the four abovementioned crucial conditions, so that this country could become a member of the family of the most developed European nations. Events to come have proved this.

The ink on the agreement of stabilization and the EU accession had not become dry by the time there were riots in the north of the country, as well as in the areas of Medvedja, Bujanovac and Presevo where ethnic Albanians wanted to overcome internal problems and ask for full autonomy within Serbia. Europe was worried, and leading politicians spread all over Serbia to convince citizens (and Europe) that there were no reasons for worry since in the future, state institutions would have timely answers to all imposed challenges thanks to better cooperation with local government authorities and representatives of minorities. However, the frequency of the incidents and a clearer revival of ideas from the beginning of the nineties indicated that there were reasons for increased caution. The situation did not become worse only owing to a timely answer of state authorities to extremists' provocations by means of force. Although it is important for maintaining present stability in the country, a prevention of causes not resulting in sanctioning should be stressed in the future. Is this goal achievable?

If this is done by means of force, then it would not be achievable. Using force to establish the rule of law will only make the situation worse, which has already been bad due to hatred present for a long time. Those who hate all orientations have a ready answer for suspending riots by force: by directing hatred towards the state. By proving that their citizen rights and freedom of speech are allegedly endangered by a democratic state, they spread hatred among their numerous followers. This results in doubts in the state's efficiency and personal safety of other citizens, which may have negative impacts on the stability of the society. Therefore it is necessary that a social climate be established resulting in true reconciliation and facing the recent past, along with legal steps.

The process of reconciliation and facing the past was killed in our country even before it started. The Committee established

after the 5th of October changes has not even become operative. Many of its members resigned before the Committee started to work because this body did not have essential powers necessary to justify its formation. There have been no similar attempts since then. New authorities didn't want to see the benefit that could come from such a process. Being lulled into peace with the support of over 90%, the ruling parties at the time would rather see their to-date allies as threats than as parties who had implemented the politics that had led to the complete national catastrophe. Instead of discrediting their programs and bad acts through unbiased investigation and facing the recent past, the authorities of the time made different political, monetary and safety agreements, resulting in criminals becoming overnight heroes-guardians of a revolutionary flame, thieves becoming respectable businessmen, while villains easily became the security of politicians in state authorities and parties.

The rehabilitation *de facto* and *de iuris* from crimes made in the name of the former regime had such a negative impact on the overall society that the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the time stated that 2002 was a lost year for Serbia. He wasn't the only one with this attitude. However everything was in vain. All these warnings did not inspire actual activities in this respect. The authorities of the time, due to constant internal fights, seemed to have lost their strength not only to face the past, but also to make a decisive move in relation to reforming society. The shadows of people who made numerous politically-driven crimes were cast over the whole society.

The beginning of 2003 promised nothing better: people with shady pasts used their influences to start a specific correspondence through the media, unworthy of a serious state. They even dared to point out in their correspondence what path Serbia should take, stressing a past full of patriotism, not willing, of course, to prove to the public in what manner they had achieved it. Why would they do so anyway? War criminals and villains became so powerful that they didn't have to hide behind the secrecy of certain services and affairs of state interest, rather they started to lecture on the political and economic future of Serbia, humiliating its officials as being incapable and lost. Everything

indicated a big misfortune, lots of people warned, but did so in vain. The state was completely incapable of taking action.

With the tragedy of 12th March 2003, the process of facing the past became significant. If the state officials had addressed this social and state issue seriously, the immediate assassins would have been demoted, at least, if not imprisoned and deprived of any possibility to tragically influence the state's fate. But another chance for a final fight with the past after the Prime Minister's assassination was lost for good. Instead of the widest national action taking place in which, along with force, institutional bases for a detailed dispute on the causes of this national tragedy and facing the bitter past would be established, the new government decided to arrest and discredit political opponents. Police investigations and witnesses before courts confirmed something that almost every citizen of Serbia had feared: deep interlacement of war crimes, criminal offences and business. Relying exclusively on police actions and indefinite court proceedings have shown to be insufficient and far away from a meaningful strategy of a national reconciliation with committed crimes and overcoming their consequences at the present time.

Since then, delivery of the accused and material evidence to the Hague Tribunal has been the only significant action in terms of facing the past. It would be needless to point out that Serbia itself is capable of facing the past. Everything is not so dark, but urgent steps are needed to complete this process. First, we should protect what we have accomplished. Threats and irresponsible statements of politicians have made things worse for investigating authorities and judges in charge of war crimes and organized crime. Strict punishment and providing conditions for timely action of prosecuting authorities and administration of justice would remove this obstacle.

Apart from legal steps, public debates on committed war crimes should be stimulated. Of course, these public debates should fit in a larger frame as a base of serious research of experts from different fields, whose results would be presented to the public as the beginning of a serious reconciliation with the past. In order to accomplish this, immediate cooperation among authorities, parties, non-governmental organizations and media needs to be established, which unfortunately has not been done.

Cases are taken into consideration individually, everyone has a different opinion, and the tragedy of the past years cannot be seen in its whole.

Leading politicians and representatives of religious communities in Serbia need to participate in this process together. A cooling of tempers and seeing the war tragedy as a whole took place for the first time in religious communities. The first contacts in respect to inter-confessional understanding took place at the time of clashes in the territory of former Yugoslavia, but little has been done in respect of this so far. Disagreements and deeply rooted prejudices still exist and inter-religious dialogue seems to have faded away. The state must take action and protect this process in order to prevent unpleasant surprises such as setting alight religious facilities and causing religious hatred. However, a promising thing is a publicly expressed attitude of condemnation on the part of great religions and religious communities towards extremists. Therefore, the support of the state, parties, non-governmental organizations and the public is necessary so that this process could be continued and not be based only on kind words and true wishes.

Of course, we cannot neglect the role of Europe. Europe as a political, economic and societal goal of Serbia at this moment must encourage us every step of the way towards international reconciliation both within the country and in the western part of southeast Europe. Reconciling the past on the territories is connected in the shared decomposition of the SFRY and the mutual heritage with and mutual tendency towards a future within the European Union. Encouraging inter-dependency and cooperation among newly formed states will contribute not only to their reconciliation of the past, but will enhance their journey to Europe and ease adaptation to conditions they need to meet when they have become full members of the European community. This can be done only with the full support of Europe. With full support, we can ask: *Quo vadis, Serbia?*

Bojan Savić

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this essay is to postulate and to offer answers that, submerged in unilateral perceptions burdened by emotions and day to day political uses, delineate the ontological core of awkwardness, divisions, and irrational anger existing in Serbian society at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century. This is done in relation to the “Balkan tragedy“, and the phantasmagorical system of decapitation that left in its wake countless consequences, and in fact countless lives reduced to the brink of senselessness. The problem is assessed based on three questions:

- How are we to close the labyrinth of legal, political and moral responsibility for acts committed during social conflicts and bigotry, which persistently disorients Serbian society into a second decade, and naturally, whom to leave behind inside this labyrinth?
- Is the labyrinth in this case synonymous with chaos, or is it an unavoidable reflection of the complexity of the problem?
- Can and should anyone assist the Serbian society in facing the defeating facts from the immediate past, and if someone is in fact able to do so, who should this be?

The criterion that dissects this overly complex and controversial phenomenon, and represents the source of the above three questions, is the seemingly utilitarian, therefore nonessential “bad service“ that the Serbian society can offer itself if it undertakes to deal with this seriously. We cannot simply offer space to fact quasi-solutions and pseudo-answers, such as: “Balkan and foreign politicians are to blame / none is to blame, it was war“, “it is the duty of the EU, USA,... the west to assist us in surpassing economic problems, which will then lead to pacification of the Balkans ... “. The criterion is the fact or the situa-

tion that should lighten the current awkwardness and confusion pertaining to the identity of the Serbian society. In its background lies in fact a clear value – a productive archival of all past nightmares and modernization of society (not only technical and technological, which is possible even without finding solutions to difficult questions). Once the critical mass of social will to dig into the recent past is formed, and we reach some sort of consensus about discoveries as a result of a collective viewpoint of the society pertaining to the definition of the problem and its solutions, Serbian society will be capable of removing itself from the bottom of humanity and rejecting the collective amnesia that preserves a spiritual peace of mind.

In this respect, here we shall make an attempt to show that the key responsibility for undertaking required steps toward modernizing society by accepting the existence of other national histories (however less glorious they may be), lies on the dynamic, (somewhat amorphous) segment of the social continuum, a part of the general public – the civil society, and consequently the individual.

ANALYZING THE PROBLEM

It is not only that the general public in Serbia is not being offered messages that there were also guilty parties among “our own“. The strength of any society lies in a moral responsibility to victims and the establishing of the level of legal responsibility, but rather here the message has been turned into a collective lie to ourselves and to the world: “naturally that none of ‘our own’ are to blame, as proven by the sincerity of our resistance, but for the sake of our country, we must deliver certain individuals, and process some ourselves...“. The lack of respect for legal and penal mechanisms could in fact somehow be accepted if a legal state existed, as well as the will to implement the law (but such mechanisms are not respected, because they do not exist). Existence of this would offer some sort of hope in a functioning penal system, however the general (within the system of government) lack of will to approach the process seriously is much more overwhelming.

The most serious point in this problem is the attitude of the public towards events in the immediate past, as well as

towards war crimes and war criminals. Here, we reach the, seemingly, key player of the story about the search for truth and its constructive use in social reform, and of the public as the depository both of the problem, and probably, of its solution.

It is clear that the Serbian public, being a connected society equipped with the media, is interested in public affairs and has pronounced and dynamic viewpoints, reactions to events in the real world, as well as requests aimed towards the legal and political system. It is, quite apparently, deeply divided when it comes to the issue of the past war, to such an extent that we could even claim that there are two publics in Serbia, diversified in their values.

So, why should it be claimed that the solution of this constitutive social problem lies with exactly such a public? There are at least three reasons:

- the fact that in rapidly functioning political systems, faced with requests from the modern society, one of the rare barriers to the rapid growth of the democratic deficit within these systems is exactly the public, which through its reactions, requests, and public opinion, compensates the declining role of parliamentary control and the increase of comprehensive control by the bureaucracy;
- the public, by using capacities of its continuous appendage, the civil society (for example, media often gain important explanations, information, even from the realm of the “insider“, from the academic and university circles, from NGOs, etc.) obtains the largest relative sum of social resources and information (some of this comes from synergistic effects);
- the public is the element that can, owing to its elasticity and dynamics, enter all pores of the political system (legislation, government, judiciary, political parties, bureaucracy, political behavior, and culture) to peel away the sediments, and to initiate the process of self-reform.

Regretfully, dilemmas pertaining to whether the process of “peeling away“ requires some sort of avant-garde (and the wrong conviction that it does, which is reflected in the never ending and destructive lamentation over the loss of Prime Minister Djindjic),

as well as the lack of success in profiling this avant-garde and having it “take the lead“, inhibits the actions of a civil society (as a form on the core continuum society - civil society - public) and buries it in a new spiral of ineffective dilemmas. Apparently, the solution is that no one should undertake responsibility for us and with us, that responsibility should be taken on by the individual (or the awakened/atomized group of individuals), initiating the process, infecting numerous social networks as resources of the civil society, which, finally and as a consequence, pressures the public to alter the general self-perception of Serbia.

This seems to be the response to the characteristic prejudiced question: who should answer the three abovementioned questions as a principle of reaching a social consensus. With all possible limitations of the offered answers, it is important to state that, in view of the gravity of the problem, one must dare to answer these questions.

Even though little is done at the level of authority to finalize the process, the volume and reach of legal and political responsibility, at least at the level of courts, seems to be clear, and we have generally answered by beginning to analyze the problem (focusing the legal edge at individuals for whom there are grounded doubts of having committed war crimes, participated in their planning, or assisted, and propagated hate speech). In truth, numerous practical puzzles appear when in each concrete case there is the need to assess if there is legal and political responsibility (it is exactly within the concrete cases that it is important to disentangle these two categories from the partially conciliated relationship). This especially occurs when there is the need to assess if this implies political and legal responsibility in such a case (i.e. if for the listed form of political conduct there was a legally established route of responsibility), and to assess how to proceed toward individuals who had made a wrong political decision, but cannot be called to answer for this in the legal and penal framework (for example, what is the level of Milosevic’s responsibility for not accepting the Rambue document in 1999). However, in this field the only debatable point is the strength of the society to be rational, and to assess the consequences it suffers from such acts, or lack thereof. Here, again, the society is the depository of all subsequent rights for moral

and historical responsibility. But when it comes to moral responsibility, one should not be sparing. In addition to the already known, and somewhat frayed thesis, that, after all, Serbian voters had voted for Milosevic, it is important for each individual to ask himself: did I ever feel as if I supported an escalation of acts of war, potentially aggressive goals of war, or finally, any war crimes, due to a sense that they would elevate my national pride? Did I ever feel that Serbian victims are our victims and these are the only ones that should be considered? Because, after all, each takes care of his own, and based on this, have I made any political decision carrying even a minimum of political significance? The sum of the network of individual or group candid answers will gradually, however much this may sound like utopianism, change the state of public awareness, guiding also the Serbian public toward exerting stronger pressure on authorities to punish, or take part in punishing the guilty.

The labyrinth seems very complex, but the point is the existence of an exit. However much the process of coming full-circle for the responsibility at all three levels (political, legal, moral) may seem unpleasant and long, it offers some sort of a way out, which is again endlessly better than the senselessness of going around in circles. All may not be punished, and it may be difficult for us to confess our share of responsibility, and all may not take on their share of responsibility, but as long as the generic core of democracy – the critical mass – does so, this is better than being in a perpetual state of scuttling in order to avoid the truth. The truth will probably burden the social field, at least in the short term, but by the force of logic, it will mobilize – it will create a new state in the society, a new fact. However beforehand, it is important to present the truth, both in the media and in people's minds.

This brings us to one of the puzzles of instrumental significance: should we do all this on our own, or should anyone help us, and to what extent? It is good and natural to do difficult things with support, and that makes the task easier to do. It is good to have generous assistance too. However, it is important to draw a quality line (even though it may seem like quantity): we need to be the ones who will cope with our difficult problems. So, it is useful when someone does the job with us, but not instead

of us. Europe usually knows the values, and in the long run, the use of respecting human rights. It also had to learn this. And in this context appears one of the “parasitic” theses imported into this society: let Europe and the USA assist our economy, and thus stabilized we will be more capable of solving difficult problems of identity, of identifying perpetrators and, as a consequence, reconciling with others. The basis for this viewpoint is, in fact, a general thesis: economically more stable societies lack conflicts. In addition to the fact that this thesis is untrue, since the contemporary situation offers numerous examples to the contrary, in our context it also contains a clear logical error: identity problems are successfully solved by, in the cultural sense, modern societies, not by rich societies (which may be additional caution to enter into conflicts, but this is a completely different matter; for example the formation of the EC was initiated by the reconciliation of former enemies, led by new elites, at a time when they were still poor and devastated by war, and not when they, as already functional markets that have already accumulated social wealth, saw the uses of a simple economic integration). Chasing all the benefits of utilitarianism, it is hard to see how our society could behave differently. This means more than that we must not make a mistake in the sequence of steps. On the contrary, this is essentially important in the sense of selecting players who will take on responsibility. By transferring the entire responsibility of our reform of identity, and the social modernization of the west (which purportedly stems from economic prosperity), we in fact deny responsibility of accepting our own mistakes. No one can bring us to terms with ourselves and with others unless we ourselves beforehand decide to come to terms on solid foundations (any other direction is but sweeping the truth under the carpet of history, and not reconciliation). Serious societies cannot afford the luxury of running away from responsibility. It seems that Europeans have realized this. Now it only remains for us from the Balkans to accede.

Marko Bešlin

The issue of guilt is undoubtedly the most sensitive issue facing man. The obligation to avoid the continuous feeling of guilt seems to be rooted in us since childhood. We would do anything to escape from sharing this type of moral responsibility with others, or to escape from, God forbid, consciously taking part in it. We pass it to someone else unselfishly since this is much better and less painful for us. I don't know whom we should thank for this "gift", but it's obvious that this feature is common to a great majority of the population in our country, and it will definitely adorn future generations.

However, when speaking of guilt we cannot help but put forward the issue that has been looked at by the public with more and more intensity. It is the issue of individual and collective accountability. Serbia is a country that managed to get into more wars during last ten years than some other countries since their beginnings. These wars brought forward a sea of guilt of differing weight. Running away from accountability and denial are only the instruments for temporarily hiding the truth. Wars have ended and the time to collect debts has arrived. We have postponed this way of offsetting accounts for a long time and with great desires, but this has also come to an end. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has initiated the court proceedings against Serbia and clearly pointed out to the whole world that it wanted to break with the past. I can understand the attitude of our neighbors only in view of their wish to determine guilt, however I cannot understand that they want to accuse the whole Serbian nation of what happened to them. War was outrageous on both sides, sparing no one. In every country leaders are elected in order to represent the nation. We selected a leader not to lead us towards death, but to tread paths for a continuance of life. Our only fault was that our interests were not represented in an adequate manner by those who should have done so. It would be silly to think that one nation elects politicians and leaders whose life missions are killing and destroying.

Political representatives are those who lead a country in the name of a nation, therefore it is difficult to understand reactions of some countries who would like to assign the role of a culprit to the whole Serbian nation. Such definition of culprits is silly and would destroy a complete nation. I say it would mean injustice not only since it would automatically denote my own guilt, since I am a Serbian citizen, but also because it would result in mixing collective and individual accountability. Sharing the same religion and territory with those who actively took part in crimes must not result in my feeling of being responsible and guilty, not for a moment. I am not to be blamed for being born in the country where people accused of crimes live. If someone has not committed a crime physically, he cannot be guilty and accused. Here I would like to point out my specific attitude towards those who were in charge of making commands. I cannot represent their side at all. A drop that surpasses the brim of a glass would definitely be generalizing guilt and obliging unborn children this feeling. This glass was full for the last ten years, and certainly it would not be wise to spill it now. It would be better to leave it filled to the top until the last drop evaporates in time.

The solution may be initiating proceedings for individuals based on the principle of hierarchy of responsibility and powers. This is the only acceptable solution. No one wants to be responsible and sentenced for something he is not responsible. We don't want to pay debts of individuals, but we must constantly remember our political and election orientations since powers of criminals were based on them. Facing a not so distant past and its sincere consideration may be a guide on the journey towards European integrations. The politics of oblivion and motto: "It's ancient history", must not be prolonged in this case.

Every man has his own vision of truth. One will manage to convince oneself that his vision of truth is the real one. Final changes have not taken place in Serbia yet. There are lots of people who look down on these changes. My personal attitude is an optimistic one in respect of benefits these changes and reforms will bring us. Maybe I will be laughed at for my hopes and wishes, but I have the right to believe in a better tomorrow. I would like to be a pawn in a new order, but I would also like to build my own future as an individual. The importance of fac-

ing the past is not only crucial in respect of European integrations, but also for making the solid basis of a new state and political philosophy. We must independently carry out the changes and reforms in the country, and then ask for support from abroad. Of course, this support is always welcomed, but it can also cheat us into believing that with each new donation we are closer to our goal. We are to be blamed for being where we actually are, therefore we are the best ally to ourselves. A well-known saying "let's clean our house first, and then a neighbor's" might be applied here. Every individual should look into him or herself, and then feel free to make comments on others. The issue of changes is a complex and long-lasting process, and it is impossible to carry it out overnight. It is important that many people have hope for a better tomorrow, so that we could go faster towards Europe. Changes must take place and every individual should actively take part in them in accordance with his or her abilities. Mistakes must not be repeated, at least not those meaning the loss of human lives. A top quality prevention of potential mistakes may be a constant remembering of our wars during the last ten years. A society under such psychological pressure has chances for the future. The last straw before the abyss called isolation has been given to us, time will show whether we have caught it.

Jelena Jorgačević

On guilt, truth and change in Serbia

I often fear thinking that Nietzsche was right when saying that there were no truths but only perspectives. When I listen to people who are very much confident in what they are saying, and then when I hear the opposite side of a story with equal passion, I can only smile, with the approval of Nietzsche's words. But there is something that cannot be wiped away, reinterpreted and turned away.

These are facts, figures and evidence. However, these are not numbers that in their coldness can take away human quality and equal a man to a figure, or life to statistics, rather they form the sum of an unquestionable past that cannot bear calculations. Turgenev used the expression "inevitable evil" in such a beautiful way when saying that once our conscience becomes accustomed to accepting something as an "inevitable evil", then things soon begin to look more "inevitable" and less "evil". I guess we should protect ourselves from this - the buying off a primeval feeling for morality or looking for justifications for the unforgivable. Outbreaks of blindness, just like in Saramago's novel.

Whenever I speak of this "war of ours", as they call it with pleasure, I become afraid I would be either too pathetic or that I would not be able to stop saying things like: *We have to accept our guilt. We must be ready to change. Since that is the only way.* The more I hear these words, the more they sound insincere; they attain the value of some hit slogan and lose their real meaning. I guess people think that if something is repeated a sufficient number of times, it will be accepted. Also, the issue of guilt and regret is often taken as something abstract, too easy to handle. That is a process, not a moment. It is a period of gradual reflection. For, it would be wrong, I think, to accept something since something has been said to be like that. Since the one "from the above" has said that the only way is the way of changes.

I believe that if something is taken as it is, if it is not really accepted, then suspicion will appear sooner or later and it will burst into flames owing to some good speaker. All people individually, I do not use the term “nation“ since it reminds me of a driven mass, must understand that it doesn't refer to someone's capriciousness. Jealousy. Malice of some big country. No one casts revenges on us. It is something that takes place here all the time. An idea, urged again and again all the time that Srebrenica was framed on us because someone did not like us.

Things are not black and white. We are not all killers, or martyrs. But people with names and surnames, the Serbs, used to kill civilians. That is the fact. There were elections and majority of people chose Slobodan Milosevic to represent them. That is the fact. He is not the only one to be blamed since one man, no matter how powerful he is, can make war alone. And this is also a fact. Between two opposites, being completely innocent or completely guilty, there stands Aristotle's golden mean. As a nation we are inclined to the extremes. We must protect ourselves from this as well.

There is no small evil. I often hear disputes on the number of killed civilians. This doesn't make one's sin less. Human lives should not be weighed. If one innocent person was killed, we should find the culprit and sentence him. There is one more thing that worries me. Why? Why should we know what happened? Since this is the precondition for entering the European Union. And if this becomes the main reason, a leading thought, then we will not make a step farther than the beginning. We must accept certain things because of ourselves and our own peace. There is no worse thing than insincere penitence.

How everything seems meaningless nowadays when Croatia is one of the rare countries we can enter without a visa! I am twenty years old. The war for me then was sending parcels to cousins in Sarajevo, embellished news and a few conversations of the adults that we might ask for immigrant visas to New Zealand. But now, it's simply impossible that so many people kept quiet then. How many of them didn't dare oppose? Is obedience such a strong emotion? Was it possible to convert people so easily, as if they had been marionettes? There are many who bear moral

responsibility. And too many justifications. All kinds of justifications. But, at this moment, I cannot think of any meaningful one.

Things were called wrong names for too long here. For too long, three fingers were a symbol of patriotism, while common sense meant betrayal. People say that amending mistakes takes twice as long as the time spent on making them. Something was accepted here too quickly, and something constantly makes trouble in our heads, not allowing us to breathe in fresh air. Let's rub our eyes, or at least take off our glasses.

Where do we go?

To some better society. Kant himself admits that everlasting peace is only a utopia, but this doesn't mean we should not strive towards it.

The words “tolerance“, “accepting differences“, “non-discrimination“ look worn out to me! However, their success is necessary. A human, a thinking one. Born without knowledge or desire. “Thrown“ to Serbia, Croatia, Cuba, America. Build awareness of the fact that all of us are humans. Not equal, since this reminds me so much of uniformity, but equal in rights. In my opinion, that is a healthier form of equality.

Build a society in which such things are not allowed to repeat. We have a very strong warning behind ourselves. So strong, that every day we are reminded of it. People say if someone is not ready to run away from his past, he will never be able to make a real step forward. The past will come back to him like a boomerang and pierce his skin when he tries to move. Some of us do more terrible things. They falsify a yesterday and make it according to what is good for them. They manipulate everything and everyone causing collective amnesia. And they give us a new yesterday.

What I'm trying to say is that we have to face them. Without withdrawing. Political points should not be scored on other people's suffering, no matter if they are for or against the attitude I state here. When insincerity is felt in speech, words, everything that has been said becomes grotesque, a lie. You should keep good intentions in everything. You should mean what you say. It

doesn't take much time to see what has happened. These are those mentioned figures and facts.

I read somewhere that history is written by winners. When I look back it seems that there is no one to write ours. It seems that all of us are defeated. By everything that happened.

I hope this is the only thing I can say. I remember the story of a remarkable hero who sits in a museum during the Second World War and cannot grasp the fact that the same species that produced those works of art can actually savagely kill because of someone's name and surname.

While writing this, the words of George Bernard Shaw come to my mind: "Freedom means responsibility. That is why most of us fear it."

Dejan Vujanić

Guilt, Truth and Change in Serbia

Nowadays one does not talk much about guilt, truth and change in Serbia. It should be talked about more. In media and political parties this topic is hardly mentioned, and when one talks about it one has the impression that what is being said is not what is actually meant, and that what is being said is not actually implemented in practice. The saddest thing is the fact that this topic must be a central one in any serious social and political dispute in the country in the transition process and its journey to the European Union.

Attention should be paid to prioritizing this topic instead of trying to understand the situation and criticize it, which is the easiest thing to do. Why? Because if one does not accept one's responsibility for something one has been determined to be responsible for, simply there will be no progress. Is talking about guilt, truth and change in Serbia going to help us, being the citizens of Serbia? We cannot tell for sure, but we know that inhumane avoidance of this topic is not useful. Another issue is: Who benefits from avoiding the conversation of guilt, truth and change in Serbia, for whom this might be harmful? My answer is simple. It is harmful for those who should "bear" this guilt as their burden, who should contribute to truth by accepting this guilt and who should lead us to changes necessary for all of us by that humanistic act.

The same ones who are the most responsible hide behind ourselves as a community, pushing both the nation and the state further into the abyss. Other citizens who are not directly related to the guilt are responsible as well. They are responsible because they do not think about it, because they turn their heads away from it. They are responsible because they behave as if they didn't live in this country, and while behaving so they might not even live in this country not because they will leave

it, but because they will completely destroy the country with such behavior. It might sound pretentious but we are the state and we should take care of it and its (our) future. We cannot do this if we do not establish who is guilty, what is true and what the truth is like, on what side is our future and who may build this future with us.

Let's start from the thing we know for sure. We know where our future is. The future of Serbia is in the European Union, and there should be no doubt about it. Our future is in the European Union not only because life conditions are better than here, but because the rules, standards and values we need to make progress are there. Those are rules, standards and values that this society used to have and which have been completely destroyed, lost and forgotten during the previous years of war and life under sanctions. In order to live such a future, we must face present problems, some of which are new - capitalism and democracy, but some of which are old - Kosovo, relations with neighbors, constitutional definition of Serbia, implementation of laws, etc. In order to keep pace with the world we need to avoid making the same mistakes of previous generations. Because of these generations, the majority of Serbian citizens still think that crime is actually a heroic act, that populism is a legitimate political option, that the European Union is a thief of identity, and that international institutions are the arrogant inquisition, etc. Certain changes may happen when you have such attitudes, and these changes are changes for worse. These changes took place at the beginning of the nineties. The beginnings of the nineties nowadays mean a lost chance. Then we had a better opportunity to do what we need to do today. Then we had a chance to accept a different but lesser guilt and truth, to define Serbia's journey, journey to Europe, journey to law and institutions, but unfortunately we know what happened. That is why Serbia of today has greater responsibility since it must break with its dark past and literally crash against history. If this does not happen, I am afraid of a loss of people who think about guilt, truth and changes.

Something I also think is important is that Serbia needs positive and healthy attitudes not because someone wants to hear them, but because only such attitudes will lead towards

changes for better. Only positive work and hope for the future will lead us to that future.

Although most of the problems we have to face are the problems of the past and are very difficult to define, we must not spend much time on them. In my opinion, facing the truth and problems should not be a long-term process. Facing the truth is the moment in which such truth is accepted, the moment in which things are seen as they are and the moment in which one moves forward. We should accept our truth, history and guilt as they are. They are ours and we must not run away from them. These are things that may not be changed and for the sake of a real future they must not be changed. The example of ignoring and rejecting the history is the whole twentieth century. What has it brought to us? A repeating of events we are trying to hide from.

There is a sentence which is very important for citizens of Serbia, "We cannot stay the same in changed Serbia." The way I understand this sentence is that Serbia will change only if we change. If as citizens we understand that we bear the responsibility of this country, although we are not the government. It is important that those on the top of the state's pyramid see that our relation to the state depends on the way they treat it. When the people on top start changing, the chain of changes will end at the one on the bottom. This means that government authorities are the first who should accept the responsibility, guilt and truth, and after them citizens, which makes this circle complete, after which we may start together our journey towards the future.

Ivana Karamarković

“Without a clean up of the judicial system, all our efforts to increase activity of the police, the civil society, and the government will remain ineffective, because the court shall decide in the end, as in any other country.”

Zoran Đinđić)

The goal of this paper is to emphasize the need to fight against corruption in Serbian society, and the need for the police, and the judiciary to function. Before embarking on the first term “truth” within the domain of Serbian society (which I would for these intentions and purposes rather equate with the term “responsibility”) – we must establish guilt.

The problems Serbia is facing at the beginning of a belated and painful transition are great, numerous, multilayered, and closely interrelated: the negative transformation of Serbian society during the past fifteen years, abuse of the most significant institutions in this country, abuse of the police and the judiciary, the deterioration and arrogance of these institutions, corruption, illegal economy, organized crime, lack of decency in the media in Serbian society, and radical nationalist political currents obstructing positive changes and accession to the EU.

The pathetic term “collective guilt” often masks the avoidance of responsibility. Only a clear clash with the past and penal processing of individuals holding political, legal, and moral responsibility for events in Serbia in the last fifteen years can normalize Serbian society. There is no point in apologizing to Srebrenica. Srebrenica does not need the apology, but the competence of the Serbian legal system, as proof that crime is not ignored nor forgotten – that crime is punished according to the law. But how?

The state structure is composed of nonfunctional and mostly corrupt institutions, the police abuse authority, encouraging lawlessness in their lack of reaction; state organs do not sanction infringements of human rights, the judicial system is slow, laws are not implemented, and social stratification has ceased to exist. Serbia is divided into the few who are rich, and the army of the poor. Perturbed value scales efficiently destroy initiative among citizens by offering them no reason to develop any feeling of common interest. Citizens are powerless. Serbia is falling into the trap of the radical nationalist political current. This comes as a result of the tendency to compensate the crimes committed against citizens during the regime of Slobodan Milosevic (ideologically still very much alive), from wars on the territory of the former Yugoslavia and in the name of democracy using NATO bombs that were against international laws and the rules of the UN (when the citizens personally felt the lack of balance between human rights and political practice), by negating crimes that had been committed in the name of the citizens of Serbia, and from citizens of Serbia using the principle of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.” During the rule of Milosevic, post totalitarian nationalism was created and selectively used to strengthen internal occupation. The actions of criminals and war profiteers, in the name of the nation and the faith, degraded Serbian society and marginalized real interests of the people. The defense of Milosevic’s politics caused catastrophic consequences, while its “logic” still presents the completely outlandish positions of its primitive interests as the national and historical interest of Serbia. The honoring of criminals and war profiteers, and their raising to the level of national heroes by the radical nationalist political current can be attributed to the lack of democracy. For years, the Milosevic regime made use of control over the media, very liberal interpretation of historic facts, one-sided projections, selective use of, and complete hiding of facts, and of the monumental image of the innocence of the nation, embellished by theories of conspiracy and hate speech. These were instruments used to subdue citizens, to rob them of their rights, and to weed out civil values. Psychological blindness of the masses resulted from a combination of manipulations by authorities who used ideological pressure and material force. This was a certain road to mental retardation.

The atmosphere in Serbia is still full of apathy, ignorance, as well as a lack of ethics and critical thinking. How can one translate the concept of civil society into Serbian?_

Immediately after 5 October 2000, a reform of the judicial system was initiated; at the beginning of 2002 new laws on the judicial system were adopted, which were blocked by the Constitutional Court in June of that year. Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic was assassinated immediately before the constitutive meeting of the Anti-Corruption Council. The killers of Zoran Djindjic have not been sentenced yet, and there is no great progress in Serbia in the fight against corruption. Still, one should bear in mind that the fight against corruption is on many fronts, and that we must not console ourselves by believing the optimistic attitude that it will not take much time in Serbia. Here I wish to point out the significance of supporting the activity of the Anti-Corruption Council, the importance of implementation of the Law on Free Access to Information, the importance of implementation of the Law on Financing Political Parties, and the significance of projects with the goal to inform and educate citizens about the possibilities offered by laws.

The recent government suggestion pertaining to the reform of the judicial system, and the government strategy for achieving an independent judicial policy by 2011, have both caused sharp criticism from the Association of Judges of Serbia. The roots of misunderstandings pertaining to the judicial system lie in the lack of political will to disband those mechanisms that can be of use. Why are laws not implemented? For example, one may inquire why has the existing Law on Responsibility for Infringing Human Rights, better known as the Lustration Law, been forgotten? This law could have led to a decrease of a considerable number of judges who participated in rigging elections, and in processes with prepared verdicts held by the regime of Milosevic. The result of this law was the formation of a Lustration Commission which ceased to function before a single case was completely processed. Why should institutions of authority and public services be purged of government representatives? The answer is simple and apparent: because lustration would encompass the Prime Minister, the Governor of the National Bank, the President of the Republic, parliamentary representatives, offi-

cials, managers of public institutions, company managers, and members of the government.

It is indispensable to provide continuity in the process of reform of the judicial system. Representatives of the authorities should not be afforded the possibility to influence the prosecutor's office and the judges during processes. Prosecutors should be given essential independence and control by executive authority should be removed. The adopting and implementation of the new Police Law, as well as a long term and comprehensive reform of the Serbian judicial system are preconditions for change in Serbia. In my opinion, the Lustration Law would enable a legal closing of a Serbian past burdened by huge misconceptions, paranoid politics, and serious infringement of human rights. The public must be called to answer for crimes and to establish the truth.

Guilt and truth are established by competent courts. Thus, we conclude that the judicial system must become efficient and competent if we wish to approach real conditions for change in Serbia.

In the opposite case, the future of Serbia will be isolation, degradation and nihilism.

Maja Perović

Life in the State Union began to disintegrate at the beginning of the 1990s. War broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, after there had previously been occasional clashes in Kosovo. The war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended, leaving in its wake unspeakable bitterness, contempt, hatred, sorrow, and remorse. Clashes resulted in many leaving their homes, and many killed Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Albanians, and Muslims. It is true that for a considerable period of time, we were all able to live together, creating prosperity and a better future. No one really seems to know what happened. There are many who would like to learn, especially among the young, who had never directly participated in any of the confrontations. Will there ever be an answer to this question voiced more and more often? Today, we face a series of difficult steps, while we aspire to repent and to achieve potential reconciliation.

(Problem 1) So who is to blame? There is a tremendous problem pertaining to guilt and its qualification. Can this be qualified as justifiable - collective or individual guilt? The sense of collective guilt has certainly appeared, due to the fact that the process of reconciliation is not gradual. It will not be easy to achieve truth, because all that led to conflicts in our region is still on the scene in full force. In France, the issue of French opportunism was not breached for 50 years, nor was de-Nazification fast or easy in a defeated, subdued, destroyed, occupied Germany: it was only after 1968 that the Nazi past was faced on a broader scale.

(Solution 1) The pressure is on while conflicts still rage. Therefore, we should start with the wound which is farthest on its road to recovery. Thus, in my opinion, we still cannot deliberate reconciliation pertaining to issues of events in Kosovo, but when it comes to truth and guilt during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, this is most certainly possible.

(Solution 2) Guilt is established by responsibility and potential repentance. These two concepts need to be established from the aspect of existence, linking them to exact names, which would most definitely be the first step on the road to reconciliation.

(Problem 2) Why is there a deep divide between the public and state institutions when it comes to establishing the individual guilt of Serbs for events in Kosovo and in Bosnia and Herzegovina? This divide is apparent in the groups "for" and the groups "against" cooperation with the Hague tribunal. On the other hand, there is a very visible division when it comes to proclaiming individuals as criminals or as heroes, which is naturally of no use to anyone, but is certainly a stumbling block.

(Problem 3) It is true that all solutions in connection with reconciliation and the future, not only of Serbia, but of the entire region, should be initiated by the state institutions. Quite apparently, such an initiative is lacking in this country. Bits and pieces can be detected among members of certain parties, but not even their unity and resolve are sufficiently strong enough to combat opposing interests. In fact, there is a lack of political resolve to speak the truth, since all efforts in this direction appear forced.

(Solution 3) The forming of the Committee for Truth during the presidency of Mr. Kostunica was only the beginning. However, for such a Committee to be successful in its activities, agreements are needed between the most significant players on the social scene pertaining to goals of such a Committee. Such a common stance is not present, nor is there a common motive to face the, more often than not, very unpleasant truth. After only a couple of years, it became clear that this Committee was not performing its role of bridging the gap between acknowledgement and truth, on one side, and guilt and reconciliation, on the other. There remains the possibility that a new Committee for Truth will be formed, which would this time have serious support from relevant parties and from the somewhat stabilized state institutions.

(Problem 4) How to face the truth when there is a deep divide between the very officials of the state? This state of affairs results in oscillations among the public, as well as the media,

who become engulfed in intrigue, affairs, and mutual reproach, chasing only after current news, not the truth.

(Solution 4) The media should cooperate very closely with the authorities to create one more bridge with the general public. The media, especially TV stations, should educate the population to accept the truth. They are the ones who should awaken the desire to know and to unveil secrets. Public discussion is an irreplaceable instrument to eliminate or limit the “invisible power“ which had been the characteristic of an authoritarian Serbian society. Namely, the disrespect for human rights and freedom in the previous period was, as in all similar cases, justified by so-called state reasons, and was, whenever possible, shrouded in secrecy. But Kant once said, “All actions bordering on the rights of others are unfair if their maxim is not consistent with publicity.“

(Problem 5) In addition to the state and the media, NGOs should also play an active role. It seems to me that they lack efficiency in their activities, because they do not attempt to stimulate the population, but rather only a handful of quite often insufficiently influential individuals. I do not mean to say that their work is not esteemed, but rather that it is inefficiently directed only toward young people, via their engagement in workshops and seminars.

(Solution 5) An activity that NGOs should incorporate in their spectrum of activities is lobbying, very intensive lobbying, within the top state administration. NGOs should be the third party, and the “invisible player“ to topple the first domino piece. However before they in fact act, we must set up the legal framework which would enable us to establish an organized state.

(Problem 6) There is a definite problem of distinguishing the permitted from the forbidden, even among the legislative and the enforcement organs of the Serbian Government. This is one more obstacle, precluding the possibility to select adequate methods and procedures of acting to achieve reconciliation. A clash between higher and lower ranks of legislative documents on one side, and distorted values and morals on the other, results in such a situation.

(Solution 6) What we in fact require is an adequate change within the legislation and the education of the population. Education would be reflected in an attempt to alter the subjective

perception of the situation, as well as the perspective, which is basically black and white. Improved communication needs serious work. Anyone who pays the slightest attention to the communication between public officials is able to perceive a lack of any kind of sense of dialog of those with differing opinions. So, how are we to find a way to create a road to confessing the truth, punishing the guilty, repentance, and mutual reconciliation? Quite certainly, it is very important to have a collective memory, not a collective guilt, in order to enable moral resurrection of the entire society. It is only collective memory that can enable both forgiveness, and its basic prerequisite, sincere repentance, which protects democracy against prolonged misuse by the authorities. People need to come to terms with the truth, however cruel it may be, and it is cruel. There are always secrets, prejudices, and conflicts among the highest echelons of authority. The following must be done on the road to reconciliation:

- All steps should be gradual, without any strong pressure from the international community.
- Responsibility for crimes needs to be defined at the level of individuals, and the guilty must be punished.
- Initiatives for embarking on the path of reconciliation should come from within state institutions.
- The Committee for Reconciliation should bridge the gap between confession and truth on one side, and guilt and reconciliation on the other.
- The media should be used to link actions of the state with the broadest population. Media should play the important role of removing veils of secrecy and awakening the nation.
- Strong political and legal stability of the state is required to implement any and all measures. Therefore, an adequate legal framework, and mutual cooperation of all factors in the political life in Serbia must be established.
- Intensive education of state officials is required in order to transcend lack of tolerance, egocentrism, prejudice, and uncivilized communication.
- More pronounced engagement of NGOs, targeted at the top level of state administration, is needed.

Aleksej Kišjuhas

Introduction

“(We should) meet the emptiness of our patriotism, unnaturalness of our system of government and hide our faces from shame, for, shame is a type of anger turned toward itself. And when the whole nation would really shame itself, then it would be a lion withdrawing before making a jump. (...) You look at me and smile wondering, what has been made by that? And I answer: shame is already a revolution.” – (Karl Marx, *Letter to Rugeu*, 1843).

“The questions, if we are going to Europe, if we shall have economic reforms, higher standards, are not the first, all this is under “b“. The first and basic question, precondition of everything is the acceptance of a general consensus on our understanding of what has been done in the name of Serbia, what has been done in the name of Serbian people (...) Without confession what the Serbs have done, without a public campaign on what has happened on the territory of former Yugoslavia, it is difficult to tell that Serbia can become a civilized country, a normal one – to enter the community of European nations.” (Petar Lukovic, *Nezavisna svetlost*, no. 350, June 2002).

In spite of the “local“ populist and political story of “unbelievable/unused potentials“ of this country and a realistic wish of the EU countries in relation to the improvement of political and economic situation in the country – we are the witnesses of the fact that the Serbian society is at the very bottom of the “list of successful societies“ in the process of transition. Paying full respect to the facts according to which this process in Serbia has started, as well as to significant internal turbulence (primarily the assassination of the Prime Minister), it seems that these facts are not just sufficient to understand the “last“ position of the Serbian society.

The basic problem of Serbian society nowadays is the attempt to successfully complete deep social reforms called *transition*, as well as to find a theoretic model by means of which that process would be successfully, efficiently and promptly completed. The solution to this problem would be a discourse on truth and individual guilt within the context of social changes, this discourse being able to make these changes deeply and essentially through everything that it will initiate, and in this way bring Serbian society closer to the place in which life is safer and of a better quality. This is the thesis this paper tends to prove.

Being also aware of certain reduction of space, and using a slightly *retro* Hegelian and Marxist dichotomy, we will not focus on the so-called *material* visible determinants of a (devastated) state of Serbian society (destroyed institutions, infrastructure, physical devastation of numerous plants, technological underdevelopment, loss of former markets, over one million unemployed people, etc.). We will focus on the *ideological part*, the values of the state of the Serbian society nowadays, since it will help us define a *new ideological framework and system of values*, as, we are very much sure, a potential model of progress on the abovementioned “list of successful countries in transition“, and therefore the solution to problems accompanying social changes.

Current ideological state

The situation is very well described by the famous sentence of (the Serbian) wish for changes in 2000, *not caused by the idea of making wars, but caused by defeats in these wars*. This skillfully tailored sentence actually means that in the *sphere of ideas* there has been very little transition in comparison to the period of war hysteria at the beginning of the nineties.

It has to do with open support to individuals accused of war crimes, of a media flooded with so-called historical programs in view of promoting national ideas and justifying or mitigating recent crimes, of expansion of nationalistic incidents and graffiti in ethnically mixed environments, of constant assaults on churches of minor religious communities, of the appearance of several nationalistic ideological movements with unhidden fascist sympathies, of the extreme popularity of pseudo-scientific programs and literature of secret societies and conspiracies

against this country, of folk and rock music, which is in function of promoting conservative ideas, and of beating up those of sexually different orientation to name a few.

All these individual examples do not represent incidents, but the social reality of Serbia in transition. They are a *leading* ideological matrix, a *leading* system of values that does not sanction the abovementioned events, but rather enables them and maintains¹ them. It has to do with the deep and conservative roots of the nation, as well as a church and state at almost equal levels as was in pre-transitional Serbia. Here is the essence of the problem.

Official *transition* politics has not done anything to change this ideological paradigm. To illustrate this we would like to mention the institution of the Hague Tribunal, which represents the symbol against nationally colored crime and/or ideas of pre-transition Serbia. Namely, the reasons of justifying the cooperation with the tribunal by *transition* forces are special indicative elements. These reasons do not originate in the sphere of ideological break up with the past – but being of a completely material nature. This refers to donations and foreign loans which will (not) be suspended, to debts which will (not) be written-off, etc. Politicians from a democratic and transitional Serbia (so-called “different” Serbia) refer to The Hague as “noose around the neck”, “a bitter pill that must be swallowed”, etc., and not as the *actual* break up and discontinuity with individuals and politics relating to accusations of war crimes. The transition in the ideological sphere does not actually take place, although we see it as an important aspect in the discourse on transition potentials in general. The transition may happen only when truth on the events of the nineties has been found, and referred with clear mind to guilt, which as an activist force, rather than weakness, may discontinuously create a new system of values.

1) Of characteristics of the so-called “Serbian political ethno myth” and/or on conservative, tribal-mythological and above all still-in-use ideological matrix in the form of a fantastic myth more in – Ivan Colovic, Politics of symbols, XX century, Belgrade 2000, pages 14-16

New system of values as the solution model

Certain phrases and terms in public speech of transitional Serbia show tendencies towards the change of the ideological paradigm and system of values. Some of these terms and phrases are “facing the past”, “de-nationalism”, “catharsis”², etc. That discourse in present Serbian society when it is really in the sphere of ideological discontinuity (and not in the sphere of close materialistic interests in terms of foreign financial donations) is subject to collective criticism of the widest public and widest political subjects. However, the chance for a successful transition of the Serbian society and actual social changes should be sought in the sphere of a serious and deep discontinuity with the leading *ideological* frameworks and system of values described above.

Actually, it has to do with a radical “disappointment” in the idea of out of time/out of place significance of the individual nation, as well as from a state and church that has become a major ideological matrix at the beginning of the nineties and which is still alive. It refers to demystification of the idea of constant danger cast upon the Serbian state-church by the conglomerate of the so-called internal enemies (religious sects, masons, homosexuals, etc.), neighbors and that which is colloquially called “A new world order”. It refers to a deep and overall deletion of a dream of “individual heaven-like” origin/mission and facing the cruel and “eye-pinching” reality. These new values would mean an important step away from understanding oneself within collectivist categories at the abovementioned line nation-state-church by which the Serbian society is still enchanted.

It refers to a deep and humanistic break with the ideology of nation and state in view of accomplishing a real human *solidarity*, arisen from catharsis and discovery of the tragic character of former conservative ideas and a complete activist awareness of the tragic and real status of Serbian society. This radical change of the value paradigm would bring about a complete break with deep conservative ideas and consequently bring nec-

2) The term “sixth October” should not be mixed up with these terms from public talk, since it refers to discontinuity with material in terms of confiscating goods and influences to those who have acquired them illegally, but not the discontinuity with the ideological and conservative politics of those individuals.

essary subjective activism around certain new ideas directed towards the actual development of society. It would be waking from a self-satisfied dream of an individual “heaven-like” nature, and at the same time being aware of the “den” in which society used to sleep. A natural urge towards action would bring about a definitive change of such a state.

This model of solving the crisis may seem one-sided. The discourse on the necessity of change is in an ideological sphere only. Without any actual productivity, the situation in Serbia may seem barren. However, we repeat again, the events taking place in Serbia several years after “fifth October” exclusively favor the *material* against the *ideological*. Our immodest proposal might be understood as favoring the opposite: favoring the change of leading the *ideological* framework against the *material*³.

Therefore, if a widely-supported political role-player had an ideological, value discontinuity with the past in his or her program, and projected the insistence of accountability and guilt of Serbian society in terrors of the nineties in view of clear and unambiguous discourse of the truth, he or she would be the engine that would push Serbian society towards essential changes. Therefore the dilemma between so-called “first” and “second” Serbia seems barren since both directions, by making either wrong questions or by making them in the wrong order, leads Serbian society far from essential changes. Unfortunately, only several journalists and leaders of non-governmental organizations are assuming the necessity of changing the *ideological paradigm* in Serbia.

In spite of the utopist character of the above stated theses, they have their historical justification. This refers to the positions of Germany and Japan after the Second World War. Paying full respect to particulars of their development (and enormous material investments in their economy), the element of changing

the ideological paradigm is of crucial significance, as well as is creating a new system of values, de-nationalism, and subsequent disappointment. Discontinuity in values has been made in respect to former politics, people became aware of their own illusions and of what the illusions created, and Nazism was completely destroyed before other transitional steps. So, having taken into account all deficiencies in making analogies of this kind, historical specifics and political changes, the results that should be considered are their rapid ascent from crisis.

In the end, by explaining the Marxist thesis stated as the motto of this paper, the position of Serbian society that would pass through *the discourse on its own guilt* as shame for the past would be the position of “the lion withdrawing before a jump”, where “the jump” would be coming out from crisis. That “shame” because of a conservative and nationalistic system of values might lead into a new *discontinuous* paradigm of values, which might be called an *ideological revolution*. By establishing new, different, collective values and ideas, releasing our creativity and *then* leading towards a goal, we are able to make the material-economic “jump” worthy of a lion.

3) For example, although material conditions of living have changed since 2000, the system started to crush down the moment the ideological sphere has been disputed, symbolized by extradition of Slobodan Milosevic to Hague Tribunal in 2001. Hope that Serbian society would be ready to leave its current ideological matrices since it doesn't have to wait for milk and smuggle petrol – was wrong. The order of moves “material, ideological” is the Serbian society nowadays, 5 years after the beginning of transition, has brought to a realistic risk of coming back to pre-transitional state.

*Ljiljana Jovanović***Introduction**

“Am I guilty for the war crimes committed in the region of the former Yugoslavia by my fellow countrymen/countrywomen? How can I be guilty of something that I have not done, and against which I clearly rebelled? What do crimes, committed at a time when I was a child without the right to vote, have to do with me?”

In view of the development of the situation in Serbia, and the distancing of views of political elites pertaining to issues of war crimes, it is becoming more and more probable that the facing of crimes perpetrated in these past wars will be left to the next generations. In our country, if results of recent research is to be believed (Belgrade Center for Human Rights and Strategic Marketing, from: Danas, 9 June 2005), not only do a majority of citizens feel indifferent to victims belonging to other ethnic groups, but also that a majority of the political elite in fact approve of crimes against others. Bearing in mind that a nationalist ideology is stronger, and that many citizens decide to vote for parties with nationalist ideas, it is understandable that our fellow countrymen believe that Serbs are not to blame for crimes attributed to them.

Views that are generally accepted at a given time are the reality of a society as a whole, even if they might have no connection with established facts. Unless there is a degree of change in the entire society, and the political context, those views remain the same. I feel that one of the consequences of the present majority views in our society is that the next generation will be coping with discovering all crimes, with public confession, and with facing their consequences.

Who do the crimes belong to?

Historic memory of a society is not unified. If we regard a society as an assembly of individuals, the historic memory of

recent events contains inconsistent and contradictory statements and assessments. The society, as an assembly of citizens with various traditions, cultures and characteristics, can also contain mutually differing or contradicting descriptions of previous events. However, if history books are taken as the criterion, we then speak of memory and truth as formulated or confessed by dominant groups and ideologies. In Serbia, the status of the “dominant is given to that discursive strategy which simply ignores this issue (guilt, responsibility)” (Zhigmanov, The heavy burden of the Hague Tribunal, Danas, 14 June 2005). Certainly, it is not simple for an entire society to accept its guilt. Not only is this acceptance painful, but it quite apparently has many political and economic consequences. However, considering the fact that the present generations that hold most political power have no intention of facing crimes that chronologically belong to them, there remains the question of how this will be possible for generations just arriving on the political and social scene.

At first glance, it may seem that for the young it would be most simple to deal with issues from the past in which they did not participate. Direct participants and contemporaries of events were included in war events, and were thus divided by taking the sides to which they belong in a war. They were subjected to suffering, and to all the dire consequences, and they were under strong influences of that ideology that led to the war. Every individual had some personal explanation for current events, and these were often explanations that the conflict was inevitable, that they had justifications for one’s own side, or they promoted individual innocence and helplessness.

It is possible that following generations will think that the wars were senseless, or will not have much need to justify a war they did not participate in, to explain what side to blame more or less, and that they will not maintain a version of events without ever questioning it. It is not their war, right?

In my opinion, it is naive to believe that only time will bring important changes of views and political ideologies. To make any ideas and views general, the dominant discourse must address them. It remains within the domain of political conflicts and engagement to change relationships on the Serbian political scene, and to create new possibilities for a different reading of

history. But even with this different reading, it is still a question to what extent a new generation will accept responsibility for crimes committed in the past. It can be said that this refers to political culture.

Often, in conversations with young people around me, the opinion is voiced that we, the young, are not to blame for events in the former SFRY. Crimes committed by the army, police, and paramilitary formations, are not linked to one's own person and own responsibility. After all, this attitude is easy to understand. None of my interlocutors had participated in the war. They have not killed anyone, nor injured, raped, or dislodged. These people did not steal, burn or destroy anything. Even though these young people sincerely regret the war and the suffering of many, they do not feel that it is their responsibility. They played as much a part in these crimes as in crimes committed in Rwanda.

In my opinion, crimes committed by any country are left as a legacy to all individuals who are its citizens in the same manner we inherit hospitals, schools, libraries, theaters, sports halls, and apartment buildings. Just as we take cinemas and malls to be our property, the crimes committed by our state and its representatives also belong to us.

Of course, none of us can chose where we will be born, or what language we will speak. We can change this by leaving the country in which we live (and many young people have done so in the past period). However for all of us who are citizens of Serbia, and for all those who will become citizens in the future, it is not an issue of choice if we shall accept the crimes from the past as our own or not. The only choice we have is what we intend to do about those crimes.

Now the question appears why it is more difficult to take on a crime than, say the external debt of our country. The answer leads to identity, the dominant discourse and the distribution of political power.

It seems that the crisis of our society is resulting in a strengthening of the national identity. However, on the other hand, national identity is also important for many individuals living in societies without any crisis. In order to maintain the local identity of the Serbian people as heroic, just, and unjustly sacri-

ficed, the possibility that these same people had committed crimes and genocide must be excluded.

Furthermore, the dominant discourse is, regretfully, complementary with the national identity, and only strengthens the negation of crime and the covering up of guilt.

Finally, political power in Serbia today is distributed among those very groups that had caused the wars, and benefited from them.

In order to change the attitude toward crimes committed in the name of our people, nationalist ideologies must be weakened. It is equally important to instill in young people (since it is probably they who will have to cope with the consequences of acts of the state and of the people) a sense of responsibility and a sense of belonging. This should not be a belonging to some "holy people", whom only the gods may judge, but a belonging to a people that, like any other, has its history and tradition full of contradictions, good deeds, and crimes.

In addition, the media image and the official history must be harmonized with the findings of those who research wars and war crimes, leaving space for facing the pain inflicted to others.

Then, like we say "our economy" and "our roads", we will also be able to say: "our crimes".

Srdan Milošević

*Before it has declined,
a nation becomes blunt.*

Hercen

At the turn of the 20th into the 21st century, Serbia experienced a deep dive into darkness, and it cannot identify the reasons for such events, or perhaps it doesn't want to. Incapable of seeing the depth of civilized change that had occurred throughout the world, Serbia devoted itself to one of the rare continuous values of its history, and began finding its system of values in traditionalism and myth. The price of such a choice is always paid by hundreds of unhappy people, all over former Yugoslavia, including Serbia. In such circumstances, it is more than necessary that we speak of categories of responsibility and guilt in Serbia, for numerous reasons, both ethical and cognitive.

The lack of analysis of causes of such a deep dive into darkness deprives Serbia of the possibility of eliminating the most important generators of permanent societal crises, which are not of personal, but of structural nature. Therefore an encounter with reality cannot be achieved as a critical process of establishing a distance towards malign elements of heritage. Such an ignorant attitude towards reality reflects a harmful infantilism in civilization. An unbearable state of disorientation is perpetuated, manifesting dominant lethargy and ending with paranoia positioning the whole Serbian nation on the pedestal of a suffering righteous party.

Individuals, the agents of a dominating system of values, are here by chance, but the very system is not. In this respect it is very important to make apostrophe the decisive role of the elites, the agents of political power, and objectively, the only capable (or they should be capable of) agents of necessary change of the system. The direction of their action depends on their will

and their ability. The elites in Serbia didn't do their best to accomplish the task imposed on them by their social role. Incapability, however, is not an amnesty characteristic, especially when the same incapable elite usurp the right to pass crucial decisions for the survival of the nation. Instead of a top quality answer to the epoch's challenges, a concept of a big country has been kept. Pragmatic politics of the middle of the 19th century were raised by these elites to the level of ideology and produced a chimera, which is today determined by combining the most primitive coatings of barren traditionalism, totalitarianism, vulgar anticommunism and criminal behavior.

Originating within the nation, the elites became distant, felt contempt for society's interests and with this put in place misguided plans, manifesting in offending protectionism. The pattern of these elites' survival is constructing tirades built on conspiracy and danger for the nation, as well as illusions on an inevitable and prepared outcome.

The picture of Serbian society is the most representative result of those who usurped the right to decide on the future. Instead of a strong emanation of optimism that is supposed to fill the term "future", in the case of Serbia, future is just a mere chronological dimension, with reason filled with apprehension.

One should not live in illusions; the elites in Serbia are dark and morbid. Victimization as a key survival tool, using the main symbol of ethnic quality as a crucial argument in making a selection represents a path to disaster. And for sure, it is the way to avoid the responsibility of Serbia in the dark war drama taking place within the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

Serbia needs distance from a heritage overloaded with internal and external violence and crimes in order to reconcile with neighbors, engage in historical processes and prepare for the future. This distance, the imperative of a dignified survival of the Serbian nation in the 21st century means a distance from illusions and myths, a painful process of facing the dramatic outcome of the whole 20th century, and, in particular, its last decade. Political elites in Serbia will have to take into account the fact that the identities of Bosnians, Macedonians and Montenegrins were formed in resistance to a Serbian nation with

assimilating tendencies, rather than potentials. It has to do with authentic historical processes that Serbia wanted to stop, not choosing means.

The last decade of the 20th century is not a marginal episode of the national past. On the contrary, it deals with fundamental categories of justice and injustice, truth and lies. It deals with the period in which radical actions took place in respect of revision of the identity for which there exists a real danger to be marked with crime, as some referential vertical line.

Assigning guilt and moral superiority to whole nations is the expression of a rough simplification. Very often, the variations are made on a morbid topic: "both parties used to kill", but somehow it always seems that our criminals are somehow better than "theirs", since "our" crimes were provoked by "their" crimes. The final outcome is a complete revitalization of elementary values and normalization of crimes.

Moral, material and human potentials of Serbia, though dramatically reduced, represent a modest reserve for the 21st century. Stigmatized by international factors, condemned by neighbors, completely internally exhausted, worn out by wars and blockades, Serbia normalized every abnormality and marginalized alternatives by cheating itself into believing in its magnitude, leadership in the Balkans and moral superiority.

Five years after the 5th of October, few people can be satisfied with the results of the new government. The outcome of that half-decade period indicates the sustainability of a retrograde model of a society, which rooted itself more after the fall of the "old regime". The identification of Milosevic with communism misted the essence and made the resistance blade blunt for those models of social consciousness that are the structural elements of Serbian society, and which communism filled with specific contents, not changing the model. The new-old material was cast in the same mould. A dominant place within heterogeneous oppositional forces went to agents of obscure ideological concepts, which do not correspond to contemporary world values just like the concepts of Milosevic politics or communistic ones do not.

The elites in Serbia, imprisoned by traditions of equality, collectivism, closeness, and a cult of water, are insensitive to problems of this society. Understanding modernization as a "hollow word", they ignored dismal everyday life and daydreamt of missions and new Versailles conferences at which geniality of the most responsible Serbian politicians would expand. These represent a breaking with reality, which could be comic and touching, but instead it is fatal and tragic.

The distance from the Milosevic heritage today is just a mere verbal identity card for any banality promoted on the political scene. That is why it is difficult to speak about changes in Serbia because of the wave of social processes. Making relative the secular character of the state, rehabilitation of collaborationists from the Second World War, ignoring the unsuccessful the educational system, lack of ethical distance from crimes that now "we know" took place, value orientation towards traditionalism and lack of willingness to create a modern identity of Serbia are some of the indicators identifying a pathological state of the society.

Modest successes in the international environment represent rather a benevolence of the international community, while there is no internal, autochthon reforming capacity, which when it does work is insufficient.

The role of a conscious member of society in said circumstances exceeds usual routine and becomes a dangerous exhibition if the member of the society doesn't accept even a small role on the stage in a social drama taking place in Serbia. A dispersive action towards building up a modern society is necessary and at the same time difficult to accomplish in a society without a developed corpus of ideas of a citizen's responsibilities.

A discouraging picture of Serbia and survival of retrograde models do not make resistance attempts meaningless and akin to "swimming against the flow". However, we must not have illusions: trying to make changes in Serbia is dangerous business. The experiences of some individuals who tried to oppose the flow are unfavorable, while the brutality of offsetting accounts with them is proportional to talents they had. They paid for their visions, courage and lucidity with political and personal discrediting, even with their lives. Incapability of reforming actions was

not conditioned by a small number of their agents, but also by the brutality of their opponents.

In simple words, Serbia developed mechanisms ranging from self-destruction to perfectionism, the outcome of which has influenced the whole region. However, it seems that the region will get emancipated and distanced from primitivism. Most countries in the region build their European future with more confidence, along with solving their internal problems and troubles. And while this European future will give loans to Serbia's neighbors, Serbia will be given bills by history for things done in the past, bills made by arrogant, untalented intellectual and political clique, which had not calculated the price of being unsuccessful in its anachronous conception of a great state. The defeat of Serbia does not lie in unsuccessful war plans, but in trying to achieve them; the reasons for economic destruction should be sought in the economic policy "pal-partner". The reasons for a cultural lagging lie in a chimerical mixture of social philosophy represented by a national instrument called the "gusle" (one-stringed Balkan fiddle), national shoes called "opanci", homespun peasant coats and "modern" techniques and manipulative machinery.

The moral and material burden of the past epoch will fall on the back of the generation I belong to. This is the circumstance which gives us the right to ask questions and request responsibility. The need to point to the state and culprits for moral and material bankruptcy of Serbia represents personal dignity, which is the only thing left in conditions that cancel the future and are a sentence to a life in the past. Readiness to change those conditions is a specific mission, starting from looking for causes and admitting the reality of problems. That is the first step Serbia needs to make.

Dženis Bajramović

Something's rotten in the State of Denmark.

William Shakespeare

I would say there's something **rotten** in the state of Serbia. Rot that spreads more and more, day in, day out, catching all parts of society, young and old, Serbs and non-Serbs, government and non-government institutions. If Serbia was an apple, with the small, almost negligible rottenness of the eighties that started to spread very fast, today there is only a small part of that fresh red apple that is not rotten.

What is the rot in Serbia?

The rot is chauvinism, clad in nationalism and patriotism. The rot is demagogy encouraging war (through voicing hatred), which has brought nothing and will bring nothing good or positive to Serbia.

The Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mr. Tomislav Leko, stated at the debate on the topic "Facing the past" that took place in Novi Pazar on November 15th 2005 that "political demagogy in Bosnia and Herzegovina has changed a lot since Dayton," and that the demagogy that encouraged war has been replaced with a democratic rhetoric, with full credit to human freedoms and differences.

What happened with Serbia? Has the rhetoric that encourages war been replaced with democracy?

If at the beginning of a new millennium in the capital city of one country a religious facility is set alight, a mosque, the symbol of differences and history in this territory, are there any changes in Serbia? If the police don't try to stop the perpetrators of this act and if a high police official states that "it is better that a religious facility burns down than to lose a human life" since

“the facility may be built again but a human life cannot be brought back.” At the same time KFOR is requested to protect Orthodox monuments in Kosovo at the cost of human lives, do we speak here of **double standards**? Is this the principle “we don’t have to, but you must?”

It is a horrible thing that happened on March 17th in Kosovo, but at the same time it is horrible what happened that night in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Nis. It should be pointed out that the chaos in Kosovo was caused by Albanians, while the perpetrators in Serbia set fire to the mosques of Bosnians. This fact undoubtedly supports the thesis that chauvinism is still present in Serbia, as well as a voicing of hatred and that Serbia is still not ready to face what individuals have done in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo.

If they are not ashamed of what they did, if their nation is not ashamed of them, if their state is not ashamed of them, how will they, their nation and their state be ashamed of what was done in Srebrenica and the whole of Bosnia? Someone will say that the state is ashamed of them and that the state has condemned such an act. The highest state officials have done so, but the court that represents the state and takes care of protection of human, minority and religious rights and freedoms sentenced the perpetrators in Nis to only several weeks of imprisonment. Several weeks for such an act! The court in this case showed itself as a rotten state institution. The court showed that double standards exist in Serbia: “one for us, the other for you.”

If most people still choose an extreme racist, nationalistic and extremist political orientation, has anything changed in Serbia? Is Serbia ready to face the crimes committed in the name of great Serbia by some ideologists, criminals, and war profiteers?

The answer is simple: Serbia is not ready. Instead of aiming at a critical, political, and social destruction of the Ravna Gora movement and its ideology, the opposite happens. The followers of this idea are glorified as certain famous and significant men such as Vuk Karadzic, Dostojevski, and Tesla. I am terrified with the thought that my children will learn in school that Draza Mihajlovic was a hero. The man who collaborated with Nazis, the

one who caused genocide on Bosnians in Bosnia, Montenegro and Sandzak is seen as a hero today. Evidences of systematic killing of Bosnians are numerous, such as the letter Pavle Djurisc sent to his superior, Draza Mihajlovic, in which he states that “our plan on destroying Muslims is being well implemented.” And then we speak of democracy? I wouldn’t be surprised if in fifty years my grandchildren learn of Karadzic and Mladic as same as they learn of heroes who contributed to the mankind like Tesla, by “releasing” Western Europe from several thousand “Turks”. Horrible!

Is anyone able to believe that after children learn in school that Draza was a “good guy”, he or she will be ready to condemn what individuals did in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo? Is anyone able to believe that a person to whom Draza is an idol would be ready to condemn the genocide in Srebrenica? Those people will never be ashamed of Srebrenica! They will answer: “What about Bratunac?” It is horrible what happened in Bratunac, it is horrible what happened in Ahmici, but crime cannot be justified by revenge. Revenge, as well as savage crime, is forbidden both in Christianity and Islam. Let’s not defend criminals! They should not be by our side, they should be imprisoned!

Crimes against Jews in the Second World War were not asked for and made by criminals and outcasts, but the elite of Nazi society. Some of them are still alive, but German society is ashamed of them. What about Serbia? Those who used to **encourage** people to commit crimes are very much alive! They are not ashamed of what they did. They enjoy credibility in the citizenry. Over fifty percent of the total constituency constantly votes for them. Is this fifty percent ever going to say “I know about Srebrenica, I am sorry, I am ashamed?” No, they will not! They will answer the question on Srebrenica by asking: “What about Bratunac?”

What do I get from “I’m sorry” from individuals, from people who are often a minority in their environment, from Serbs like Natasa Kandic? I start to understand that **not all Serbs are the same**, when I will never hear this simple word from those who wished for Serbia to become full of **rot**. Will I live to hear “I am sorry” from people who are members of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, from war criminals like Vojislav

Seselj, Slobodan Milosevic, Karadzic, and Mladic, those who openly worked hard for great Serbia, who closed their eyes in the face of crimes and directly or indirectly participated in them, ordered them, those who spread the voice of hatred today?

What should you do?

First, do not proclaim your country to be “the country of Serbs and other nationalities” but “the country of all its citizens.” That is what it should be, of course, supposing that you want to integrate all nations and nationalities in a new modern society resting on European principles of democracy, and respecting religious and minority rights and freedoms.

Second, all perpetrators of crimes on national and racial basis should be seriously punished in order to set the example for those who think similar, starting with the offenders in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Nis. This would send a clear message to citizens of this country that there is no policy of double standards, especially to non-Serbs.

Do not idolize the Ravna Gora movement because you will not be able to face the past. Do not commit a crime against your children teaching them that Draza was a “good guy”, because they will teach their children that Karadzic and Mladic were “good guys”. Then you would never be able to condemn the events in the nineties. Remove the idea of them being heroes from course books before it is too late, since, eventually, such an idea offends every Bosnian, a citizen of this **rotten** state.

If you want the integration of all communities in the post 5th October society, when all of us were one, when Serbs, Montenegrins, Hungarians, Bosnians, Romanians and others, rubbing shoulders, participated in destroying Milosevic’s dictatorship, then take care that the national anthem be acceptable for all citizens, especially non-Serbs. You have a majority in Serbia? You may chose the song “Get ready Chetniks” as a national anthem, but then it would be unreal that non-Serbs stand still when this anthem is played and that they have accepted it as theirs. Why does Serbia have to go back to the past and look for its ideals there? Why doesn’t it find them in a new history, this not being war criminals. Why doesn’t Serbia proclaim the

fighters for democracy and rule of law as its idols, why doesn’t the national anthem refer to the 5th October revolution? This is when a new European Serbia started to grow, until one bullet from a sniper’s rifle terminated one life and real democratic reforms, at least when speaking of minority and religious rights and freedoms. If you want Bosnians to stand still while the Serbian national anthem is played, then take care that this anthem is acceptable to us as well.

The moment three sniper bullets penetrated the body of your greatest reformist, the **rot** started to spread again all over Serbia.

You want us to move forward? Leave retrograde ideas behind yourselves, make new ideals. This rot eats Serbia. Sometimes I think that the freedom of thought in Serbia is **too wide**, they constantly repeat that some new focal point is in Raska region. Muhjahedins and terrorists are often spoken of, panic is constantly created in public under the motto “it’s better to be ready”. Ready for what? For plundering and genocide? Hasn’t enough of that been done?

Sometimes I think that those who encourage hatred, and those who believe them, do not even know what we look like. Sometimes I think they see us having long beards, curly hair, and that we are dirty savages. Why don’t they encourage young people to get to know each other, and stop separating us? Why do young people come to the Raska region only when there is a football game, when they can swear at “Turks”? Who is to be blamed for this? Those who encourage hatred!

Young people, let’s get together, let’s be friends, let’s start to forget! How will we forget? By saying everything to each other directly, sitting across a table and not during a football game when police squads separate us. Tell us what you don’t like, and we will tell you what we don’t like. Let’s organize debates. But not the debates where the single-minded (democrats) will be on both sides, but where there will be nationalists, chauvinists, extremists and democrats, in one word “normal” and “not-normal”.

Aurelija Dan

This year of 2006, with all those absurd wars are behind us, as well as a large number of people with sadness in their eyes and the endless question, why? Life in Serbia slowly goes on... But how??

Fifteen years ago, Serbia played the role of a character with a rifle in its hand, the rifle visiting the territories of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a few years later the territory of Kosovo. The rifle didn't hear voices communicating the messages of peace.

Nowadays, young people are not interested in what happened. They are not interested in the fact that someone's father shot at his neighbor for years, the fact that a girl of same age lost her brother, and her mother has not heard of the girl's father for years. They are not interested in these things, nor are their parents, for why should we live in the past when a new page could be turned and everything would be forgotten.

I am afraid that if we forget, we may easily allow these things to happen again. That's why I write this essay, as a protection from oblivion...

A young person in Serbia starts looking for answers for different questions only when he or she has faced issues of his or her interest. Then why cannot I, as a young and self-confident person find a job and get promoted, performing it quite professionally. Why cannot I exchange experiences with people speaking different languages, why am I imprisoned in this cage of Serbia... and why must I wait in front of the Austrian embassy for seven days in order to get a visa, which I eventually don't get.

And then my friend tells me she is not interested in politics and things that used to happen during previous years. Isn't this absurd?

From time to time I get overwhelmed with the feeling of anger and sadness mixed together. Why should I bear the brunt

for everything that happened...? Mom, why did you sit peacefully, watching the slaughter!

Karl Jaspers explains the issue of guilt in a very good manner. My mom is not guilty, she just sat and watched TV in intact Serbia. The citizens of Serbia are not guilty for having lived in a state of criminals since "where everyone is guilty, no one is guilty." This kind of guilt does not lead anywhere.

Here we deal with a political guilt that means that all citizens should feel responsible for the actions of their state, but it doesn't include individual responsibility of a citizen for crimes made in the name of the state. The responsibility of an individual starts with the acknowledgement of truth and what has actually happened on the basis of the facts, while the truth brings forward the wave of catharsis necessary for starting a normal life, without poisons of hatred left to us by our parents.

The first step in Serbia's facing the past and the way of healing the whole society lies in the criminal proceedings initiated in The Hague and in Serbia. The Committee for Truth and Reconciliation brings a certain dose of confidence and hope that all criminals will be accordingly punished. However, the whole process of progress and change has been interrupted by different propaganda of hatred, as well as with the remains of policy of making unsanctioned wars.

This political trend in Serbia doesn't want to accept the responsibility for everything that previous authorities have done, not even to take necessary steps so that the agents of politics of crime would be removed from public and political life for a certain period of time. Also, one should understand that as a thief deserves to be imprisoned, a war criminal deserves to be adequately punished. This is necessary not for achieving a certain level of justice only, but because making war crimes public and their public condemnation would be the best way to draw a line between the old and new authorities, otherwise, new authorities will be mere successors of the old ones. Serbia cherishes the politics of silence "and silence is a real crime against the human species" (Nadezda Mandeljtam).

"The consensus has been reached that it would be all right if your authorities decide to kill. If you kill within your country,

you will be in a big trouble. If you kill out of your country, in the right place, at the right time and the right enemy – you will get a medal“ (Joan Baez.). It is interesting that we witnessed the awarding of medals and rewards, as well as the magnificent sight of the generals going to The Hague.

There is no political will saying in a clear and loud voice that we should be responsible for our crimes and that we should first “clean our house“, and then let others bring forward the issue of their responsibility. We should discuss our responsibility, and they should discuss theirs.

That is why now we have the situation that our media is flooded with prejudices, stereotypes, voicing of hatred as legitimate attitudes, and fairy tales of fight and freedom. That is why nationalism is awakened again, that is why Vojvodina is full of “National formations“ and “Reputations“, and that is why all bow to “war heroes“. As if the ghost of “a fleeing general“ is suspended above, mocking us.

Girls and boys proudly and arrogantly pay tribute to criminal heroes, instead of wearing T-shirts with faces of popular singers or actors. They laugh at everything that is different, which contradicts established standards imposed by society, not realizing that wealth and beauty are there. Audrey Lord explains: “Undoubtedly, there are differences in races, age and sex among us. But this is not what separates us. We are separated by denying these differences, rejecting the questioning of false presentations that are the result of an incorrect labeling of those differences and their influence on human behavior and human expectations.“

Changes in Serbia will not be logical if the first condition has not been met. When victims are given back their dignity and all criminals punished, a solid platform or “absolute zero“ will be created from which we can start our democratization. “It is impossible to expect the reconciliation if a part of the society does not admit that evil has been made, and that we have never admitted the other part suffered, or that the responsibility for suffering exists“ (Letter from Human Rights Watch to President De Clerk). Creating conditions for democracy should reveal the “regime of torture“ and explain why certain practice has been

applied and supported. Insisting on heroism of war criminals represents a continuation of criminalization of the state after the totalitarian regime has gone for good.

The inhibited manner developing in the consciousness of youth scares me. Myths and legends of our parents who still live the Kosovo fairy tale cannot have a positive impact on young people. We become the prisoners of stories of false patriotism for which we should kill and die, as well as the prisoners of xenophobia knocking on everyone’s door. Research conducted by the non-governmental organization “Center of Modern Skills“ shows that students at Belgrade University would not share a student bedroom with someone who is Roma, Croat, Bosnian, Albanian or homosexual.

Everyone should turn to his or her individuality and overcome a collective identity of “heaven-like“ virtues. Cherishing the politics of peace, citizen and human rights and basic values of a humane society is the only way to bring catharsis, which everyone should experience first as an individual.

Post-war Germany was one of the most successful examples of facing the past. De-nationalism, along with de-militarization and democracy represented an administrative model and led to the complete break with the Nazi regime. The laws prohibiting relativism, decrying crimes, the holocaust, or glorifying of the Nazi regime were adopted.

It is interesting that facing the past still takes place in Germany. It means a constant establishment and enhancement of a system of values citizens must comply with. This is the evidence that the process of a nation becoming conscious again lasts longer than one may think. Pedagogical models of psychological and social contents should be implemented until the slightest memory of evil that took place exists. I have an impression that this process lasts forever.

Although the topic of facing the past has been present in the public recently, at this moment Serbia shows its old face. As soon as the truth in war crimes became known, an event endangering the whole process of condemning war crimes took place. Publicly established guilt of the most responsible person will

never be officially revealed. Therefore we will continue to live the movie of virtual Serbia where bad guys play the role of heroes.

The impression that generations and generations will be born before fairy tales are forgotten and epic poems cease to be passed from generation to generation is inevitable.

The change of public attitudes towards war crimes, as well as a general change of the society, will be possible only with additional legal proceedings and a realization by the new political elite that more must be done in regards to this issue.

Jelena Budimirović

THE QUESTION WE FACE

In view of volatile reactions of the Islamic world to the cartoons representing the Prophet Mohamed, Nobel Prize winner Gunter Grass said: "After the middle ages, the West passed through the Renaissance and the age of Enlightenment, through a painful process during which they won their freedom, while the Islamic world had no such process, is on a different level of development, and this should be respected." Today we see the blessings of enlightenment in western civilization, blessings brought about by the liberated and creative human spirit, the man with an awakened awareness of his own responsibility in life. To the greatest extent, this is probably seen in respecting the other man, his freedom of thought and expression, his right to differ, and all his other human rights. However, it is very difficult to detect these blessings in the Balkans, which brings us face to the face with the fact that we have not gone down the road of the process of enlightenment, that we have never left a medieval darkness.

So, what happened in the minds of human beings when they left medieval darkness behind? What does enlightenment mean? Will we also pass through the process and feel the light of an enlightenment blessed by peace, mutual human respect, and general progress? These are the questions we face, and which we are obliged to answer.

WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT?

According to Kant, enlightenment is "man leaving behind his self imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the lack of potential to use ones intellect without the leadership of others. ... Laziness and cowardice are causes why many human beings, even though nature long since liberated them from the management of others, of their own accord to remain immature to the end of their lives,

making it very easy for others to become their tutors. It is very comfortable to be immature. ... There is no need to think, when one can only pay; someone will take on the despised job for me“ (Emanuel Kant, *Spirit and Freedom*, 43).

As opposed to animals, man is a creature responsible for his actions. Responsibility is imposed by his intellect, conscience, and will. When the intellect exposes certain motives as irrational and lacking goals, the intellect offers them a moral value – proclaiming them wrong, demanding man to resist his own accord. When we listen to our conscience, and resist bad motives and actions, we become men in the most divine sense of the word. By behaving responsibly, we rise above our biological nature and external temptations, becoming free to creatively change ourselves, and the world around us.

ENLIGHTENMENT LEADS TO TOTALITARIANISM

But, we are free to renounce our responsibility, thus becoming victims of our internal weakness and external problems, and therefore also of various external manipulations. In this case we come into conflict with our own intellectual specificities, which distinguish us from other living beings. Unless we resist our weaknesses, the use of our intellect hinders us, because it exposes the irrationality of our acts. Then we develop the need for some other authority to think and make our decisions for us. The sense of what someone said is no longer so important, but rather who said it, how many people support it, and what our own feelings are about it. We form taboos that must not be breached around all that could raise the question of our own responsibility.

In addition to the fact that with our lack of enlightenment we come into conflict with our own common sense, we also fight against our conscience warning of giving in to bad motives. This conflict makes us even more infantile, because we renounce our responsibility, shifting it to someone else. We then feel the need for scapegoats, for whom we search among religious, national, racial, political, or other opponents. Our guilty conscience makes us overly sensitive and paranoid, ready to see enemies and opponents in everyone. Whoever does not support our cult is proclaimed a spy and a traitor, harboring a desire to threaten

and destroy us. For the peace of our own conscience, we abolish freedom of thought and expression, and proclaim anyone who reminds us of our lack of responsibility and our guilt, as our enemy.

An authoritarian individual constantly expects from someone else, most frequently from his ideological and political authority, to remove the consequences of his own irresponsibility in life. The more irresponsible a man, the greater his dependence on authority is, while his ideological and political system becomes more naturally fanatic and authoritarian. Instead of changing themselves, authoritarian people think they will surpass historical crises by changing their leaders, their authority. However, once an authoritarian system is set up, it becomes very difficult for the individual and the populace to mature and rely on the power of an individual's responsibility.

This was the manner of functioning of man in the Middle Ages, and the manner in which he still functions in the places where individuals and nations have not yet left those dark ages. However, such a system cannot function properly even at a formal level – if the majority is uneducated, if there is no force to adequately implement the legal system, because even those who are doing so are prone to corruption, myths, nepotism, and all other types of abuse of their power.

ENLIGHTENMENT LEADS TO PROSPERITY AND FREEDOM

The ideals of enlightenment alone, without a fight against authoritarianism, were never able to enlighten any populace, but were often the excuse for various crimes perpetrated in their name (after all, even the medieval inquisition had superior ideals and goals as the excuse for its acts of violence against the human conscience). The process of enlightenment of western civilization began several centuries before the notion of enlightenment was defined, at a time when the protestant reformation rebelled against the authoritarian conscience of medieval man.

Reformation abolished those authorities that used fear and guilt to take over the power of thought and decision making from the conscience of man, making men witness to the responsibili-

ty of their own acts, and prompting them to use intellect to analyze the quality of their motives in these acts. The human mind, liberated from the chains of an imposed single-mindedness and guilt, gained freedom of creativity. Reformist hearts bore fruit in documents of an economic, scientific, and cultural renaissance. The awakened sense of individual responsibility resulted in a change of intellect and character of virtually the entire western world at the time. Warring Swedes became peace loving and mild. The Swiss reformist Cvingli wrote: "Peace has come to our town ... envy, bigotry, and discord are no more." The Russian author Karamzin enthusiastically wrote: "We have reached England, a country among the first in Europe by the character of its people and the level of enlightenment of the populace. Here, everything is different: houses and streets, people ... in other words, I feel as if I have stepped into another world. The number of people! The businesslike manner! And the order! Content is everywhere, and even though there is no luxury, there is abundance ... Here healthy and contented people with a noble and calm appearance leave their small brick houses – the lords and the craftsmen, in clean clothes, and practically without any visible external differences." Ljubomir Nenadovic describes this change by saying: "In but a few short centuries, Germans have created a miracle, turning their country, of which Romans spoke of as a Siberia of sorts, into a veritable paradise; they have developed industry, reformed the Roman faith, created schools, science, laws, freedom, and brought real education to enlighten the center of Europe."

One of the rare Serbs who promoted ideas of enlightenment was Dositej Obradovic. He said: "Let us pass just one look over the enlightened peoples of Europe ... Only the common and the dull are satisfied with always remaining in the ways of old. Why has God given man intellect, the capability of reason, and free will, but to be able to reason, to distinguish, and to chose that which is better? And what is better, if not that which is more useful? That, which brings no benefit, lacks any inner goodness. So why should Serbs have doubts if we should follow in the footsteps of so useful and praiseworthy acts of other peoples? ... The crude and the superstitious shall cry out: 'We shall do as our ancestors have done!' But, our ancestors came to much harm

due to many different acts. Is it, thus, right and wise for us to remain there and suffer? Never! If people always remained the same, no populace would ever prosper or become enlightened. The sensible become better, those who lack sense remain as they were, or (most probably), if they do not become better, they constantly deteriorate." In this same spirit, the late Prime Minister of Serbia Zoran Djindjic said, "There are countries that have nothing, but are rich, because their people are able to organize. So – it all depends on the people. ... Serbia cannot change if we all remain the same."

This process of reform, of both intellect and character is an absolute requirement in our nation. We cannot live like parasites, forever hanging on the brink of western civilization, undeservingly reaping the fruits of its labor. To accede to Europe, we also must pass through that process of moral and intellectual rebirth western civilization has already completed. It is the only way for our people to leave the darkness of totalitarianism, and enter the world of enlightenment, democracy and mutual respect – the world of contemporary Europe.

Jelena Belić

On Guilt, Truth and Change in Serbia

Populating the regions where Europe borders Asia, small Balkan nations built a national concept different than the widespread European notion of nationality. Slavery to the Ottoman Empire lasting several centuries resulted in collective freedom seen as the top value, making a path for the domination of a collective tradition. Remembrance of the sovereignty of the Middle Ages linked the term of national identity to a certain territory in the Balkans. Historical claims in respect of regions, the borders of which used to overlap, often de-stabilized this region in good ways. Interest that big countries showed for these regions resulted in an arbitrary formation of borders, which made relationships of autochthon nations worse.

The paths of historical development had led in the same direction, while at the end of the 20th century these paths separated. In comparison to neighboring countries that took a new political course and started their journey towards European integrations, the constitutive nations of the former SFRY revived their dreams of uncompleted states. Returning to big state issues and archaic national projects they stayed on the level of a pre-political community. Not allowing evolution of the values adopted at the beginning of the 20th century, they showed political immaturity and an un-readiness to face incoming problems of the transition. National managements, dazzled with a love of power, tendered without worthy means, to be registered as the creators of the state. Having all power in their hands, the state officials in authority cast an impression that war was inevitable. They marked the last decade of the 20th century with the only war made in the territory of the old continent since the Second World War – the civil wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The victims would later be considered futile, as is in any civil war. After the signing of the Dayton Agreement, the

SFRY fell apart into federal republics, while administrative boundaries became the boundaries of new states. Born from war, the SFRY disappeared in war as well. A new sovereignty was paid in blood – several thousands of victims, huge material damage and production of violent nationalistic passions.

The false image of victory in Serbia was created by falsifying reality. The president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was even crowned with an aura of peacemaker. Another humanitarian catastrophe, which took place in 1999 – the bombarding of Serbia, was necessary in order for citizens to understand on the 5th of October, 2000, that the ruling regime must change. However, six years after the revolution, the changes are not good enough. Ethnic clashes continue to destabilize a multiethnic community. Facing the past is done partially and mostly by those who have initially pointed out the drastic consequences of national hatred. This is not enough. The truth must go through all pores of our society. Once and for all, the mistake must be identified, so that it doesn't happen again. We should redefine the concept of the nation. We need new values that can overcome permanent and unbridgeable ethnic barriers. The rule of peace will happen when a national identity finds its place in the sphere of culture and tradition, and when society has adopted new guidelines – economic prosperity and Euro-integrations. The second direction of changes is the development of a civil society. Since it rests on principles of individual freedom, the monolithic quality of collectivism needs to be destroyed, the unifying strength of which is easy prey for manipulation.

Facing the past is a long and complete process. There is no unique model, and also there is no one and whole truth, but numerous individual ones. Innocent victims carry one part of truth, and their only fault was that they were members of certain nations. Persons in uniforms carry part of the truth, and they made crimes according to commands of other people. Here we have the question – how could we allow the war to happen to us? It is unbelievable that citizens of Serbia, supporting the politics of Slobodan Milosevic in 1990, did this on purpose and made hell of their lives. No. Then they became aware that Tito's Yugoslavia was gone and that they should face the problems and changes of post-communist society. As a herald of a new time, he

was accepted as someone else could be accepted as not being a communist. However, this man, a former member of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, incapable of facing a turbulent transition offered nationalism as a universal solution for emerging problems. Intra-social conflicts were projected on the national screen in view of retaining power. Ruthless propaganda spread the idea of freeing and unifying all Serbs in one country. Horrible scenes from TV, false information and media censure mobilized national feelings. Accepting collective goals was possible due to the domination of a collectivistic tradition that changed socialism into nationalism.

The whole history of the Balkans has been marked with struggles for freedom of collective rights. The dominant political culture imposed its brand of nationalism until it self-destructed. Xenophobia prevented the development of individualism. A liberated Serbia made a soldier out of a peasant, preventing him from becoming a citizen. The Second World War caused Eastern socialism to enter these regions. Again the collectivity suppressed a revived individual initiative for a short period. Depriving people of individual freedom brought the benefits of irresponsibility. Society was politicized in order to be controlled by the state. An inefficient and overburdened state collapsed. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia did its part – the constitutive nations wanted to constitute their own states. The regime found support in xenophobia. The war postponed internal changes, which was the aim of the management. However, those who initiated the war were proclaimed peacemakers by the international community. It was necessary that horrors be repeated in Kosovo and Metohia so that it could be seen who was the main culprit. In October 2000, we finally heard the voice of those who used to condemn this populist policy all the time. The truth was faced – Milosevic had left behind a post-war defeated society, a devastated economy and a destroyed legal system.

Serbia has always been a multiethnic society. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was made a “nation with three names“. The linking tissue of the SFRY was the motto “brotherhood and unity“. The fact that a life in community was possible for such a long time signifies that it should be useless discussing in whose territory we are now. It is necessary that the concept of

nation be redefined, considering the consequences of aggressive nationalism may result in leaving it. Facing the past would deprive war criminals from the title of hero. Condemnation of terrible actions would make impossible the return of the same people to power and those similar to them. The national identity should be placed in the sphere of culture, and not in a program of a political party. We need necessary unifying values enhanced by the Constitution. The product of the values of individualism, autonomy, and tolerance is a civil society. Our civil sector is underdeveloped. Citizens must understand that it is self-constituted by means of numerous individual initiatives. Therefore it is very important to understand our own interest. Being members of the same society, notwithstanding nationality, our mutual interest is that our society makes progress. I believe that the orientation towards economic prosperity and Euro-integrations carries a great unifying force in itself. The previous state must not be forgotten, so that our will can never be communicated again by autistic voluntarism, which caused damage to many people, and huge damage to us. We have worked against ourselves for too long.

Vanja Miljković

*"If coming from somewhere you reach your destination,
 someone will offer you fresh bread and salt,
 maybe even some sweets with mild honey
 scented with vanilla, and wine.
 Then you will know that you are in the
 home of friends, that you have come to Serbia...
 Freedom, love, justice
 Are in that hand offering bread and salt
 and leaving open the door to the house.
 You are in Serbia stranger,
 and your freedom and honor are safe".*

Paul Disnard, *If you should come*

The 21st century is surely at a crossroads in the history of our planet. When history teachers speak a century from now, they will attribute to their vision of our time its importance for our civilization. They will say: "It was the time when the world changed!" This is the century when global disputes will probably end, Europe will unite, and the danger of World War III breaking out should be reduced to a minimum. We live, therefore, at a time crucial for the future, without being aware of this. And, in the Balkans, in a country with a long history crisscrossed by fighting and disputes, at the threshold of the new age, detailed and quite insignificant discussions are still raging about the lost years. This is a country founded on the Orthodox faith inherited from the Byzantine Empire, a country that had a king already in the 13th century, and an empire in the 14th. It is a country with scientists and artists who contributed to the progress of civilization, but which many people in the world do not know the exact location of, first thinking of war when they hear the name Serbia. In the last decade, many have left this country, searching for a better future in the homelands of others.

The Serbia of yesterday, and the Serbia of today, a Serbia of conflicts.

Eternally struggling with itself, will it ever awaken from the long sleep and comprehend the messages from its own past? It was always hindered by the struggle for power, which goes on unabated after all these years. Are you for the Obrenovic or the Karadjordjevic dynasty? For king, or party? For Slobo, or Vuk? SPS or DOS? DSS or DS? G17 or the Radicals? The regular daily cacophony, wherein nimble trinket merchants offer variously packaged phrases. From the TV screen Great Politicians offer the message: "People, if you give us the power, salaries will grow, pensions will be regular, and Serbia will be a country of milk and honey. The others are to blame for everything! Down with the Government! Dissolve the Parliament". Other Great Politicians respond: "How can we let those who have ruined this country speak of us who have done everything to create better living conditions in Serbia! To the guillotine with them!" Elections, and there were so many in the past five years that it would be difficult to find anyone who could count them all, are a real tragic and comic drama, with the obligatory two acts. In the first act everyone will spit on everyone else, until perplexed citizens, who with every repetition give up more and more of their roles in the show, offer someone their ballot. Then act two begins as a boxing match between the two remaining contestants, with the rest of the actors cheering from opposing ringsides. With parliamentary representatives acting like they are lost in repeats of the popular soap opera, people become lost in a labyrinth of intertwined lies and half-truths, cheering on their duels in front of TV screens, taking time off during the intermissions to watch "the Grand Show". They use pink lenses to peek into the world of renowned pseudo artists, a century in Serbia ended, as it had begun - with an assassination. And we all feel great! Only let there be money for new episodes of soap operas, and for salaries for parliamentary representatives!

It is hard to distinguish the truth in today's Serbia. Is life what we read and hear every day? Deluged with meaningless information, it seems that we are forgetting real values, and are becoming part of the indifferent grayish-green sea that Domanovic had described in his "Dead Sea" at the dawn of the 20th century

(Is it possible that we have not changed at all?). If you ask a fifteen year old for the title of the new song of the new Grand Show “music” star, you will get the refrain in the bargain, but if you ask who the only Serbian Nobel Prize winner was, no answer will come. Children in Serbia are growing up listening to all sorts of nonsense, hollered by half dressed (rather – half naked!) puppets, and have themselves lately started to join in this mad party. By discussing “essential issues” (with whom was a show star unfaithful to her boyfriend, how much money a sports star got for a transfer, which politician called whom a thief), empty lives gain false sense, but the emptiness remains. Who created this Serbia? Are we to blame for being part of the circus, and for not changing our own bad habits? This very same question pops to mind after reading Domanovic’s “Leader”: should we blame the people for blindly following the leader, or the leader who had, even though blind, undertaken to lead people to their doom, without telling them his secret? We have had our taste of this: absolute confidence led to wars! People did things they could not have imagined even in their darkest nightmares – ex-neighbors took up knives and guns against each other because they were on different sides, families disintegrated, moral principles were buried for years, and crimes were committed. Who can justify these crimes? Is this the spirit of a people regarding themselves as having inherited the Orthodox tradition?!

We made another mistake – our attitude changed. We thought that we would wake up one morning in a country bathing in the sunlight of the new millennium, without having to do anything ourselves. When we start making decisions about our own lives, and when we have the strength and the will to stand up to false patriots, who only love money and power, we will manage to change reality, and we will realize that it is not necessary to lose everything in order to be accepted by Europe. The rest of the world is by no means perfect, but it is aware that without change it will never survive. We should not fear change, because without trying and failing we will never know the true value. The search for the truth, the real, absolute truth, is by all means a trying and long road. It is always easiest to give up, and succumb to indifference, however hard and shameful indifference may be. Is that what we desire – to keep saying for the rest of our lives that we

had been tricked, to search for culprits in the past, full well knowing that we are ourselves the greatest of culprits?

Being part of the world does not mean only to improve the standard of living, but to be able to correct one’s own mistakes. And most importantly – to have a spirit that is part of civilization, which originates in our hearts without losing our individual uniqueness in the process. Besides those who see the world as a great enemy of tradition, there are others who accept everything from the world as validated. Intoxicated by the “American dream”, quite aware of its high level of artificiality, they still wish to live the dream of becoming one with the “stars” who hide traces of vice and suffering behind their masks. We must be aware that the world also still makes mistakes, and that not all those who geographically belong to developed countries are true champions of humanity

When we find the courage to forgive each other for a word that had been too strong, to respect those who are different, to understand the suffering of others, and when we find within ourselves a spark of true humanity, we will know that we are on the right road to bring Serbia back to the world that it left due to mistakes made by our predecessors and by us. In gray and foggy years, values lose sense only if they never were a true part of the human being. May all that has happened be a lesson to us. The same mistakes are repeated only by those who never stop on their journey through time to review their acts because they don’t have the courage to look themselves in the mirror. And what is our mirror image today? Serbia is facing questions that require bold and swift answers, but watching TV soap operas, and singing silly verses of “new folk music”, turning its head from problems that could cost its existence. In various TV talk shows, the search is on for those who are to blame for our present state, but no one is mentioning any possible solutions. When will we grow tired of this endless trial and take steady steps into the future, where there is a place for every variation?

Serbia tomorrow.

A Serbia previously described by foreigners who felt safe in it. A Serbia nurturing tradition and changing bad habits. A Serbia offering love and forgiveness, creation and gifts. A Serbia loved

and forgiven. A Serbia in which young people see their future. A Serbia with the scent of raspberries and wine. The homeland of Andric, Kis, and Crnjanski. The "Sumatra" of the world.

Do we have within us enough desire to achieve this ideal, to liberate ourselves from guilt and head toward the truth?!

Senka Čekrdin

Guilt, Truth, and Change in Serbia

The awareness of young people in Serbia about events, people and situations that create their lives has been reduced to a minimum, and it is therefore my opinion that it is necessary for everyone to awaken the citizen within. We need to know who is pulling the strings above our heads, and to create our own opinions about the present situation by reading, monitoring media, listening, and participating in conversations.

The notion of guilt in Serbia carries all that has been swept under the carpet for years, and has now begun to resurface. Regardless of the fact that some officials are still trying to tidy up this country by hiding events that have happened, this will continue to go on unless the truth surfaces.

What was it that in fact happened to us? Hate happened, from which discrimination emerged as the winner. Sexual. Racial. Religious. It happened that we forgot that Croats, Bosnians, Albanians, Roma are ... people, not our public enemies. We forgot that war does not start by the whole nation suddenly deciding to kill their neighbors because they are not Serbs, but that it all happens according to a plan prepared in advance.

We forgot that we must implicate the guilty; those guilty for death, for lies, and for deception. It seems as if we are no longer able to respect lives of others. We let the personal interests of others rule our lives. We lost the power of rational reasoning, and we let ourselves hate that which is right out loud, under the pretext that everybody is acting against us, and that they want to destroy us.

The truth is that we no longer want to open our eyes, because that is easier. But the truth has begun to surface, and now, whenever we turn our heads, we see it on all sides, regardless of the effort we put in not to confess so.

Still, the change is reflected in the fact that we have once again begun to learn how to walk the line. We are reminding ourselves that breaking the law means punishment, that we are not the only nation in the world, and that evil was done not in the name of the nation, but in the name of individuals.

We need to bang our heads against the wall and to face the future, and the future starts by cleaning our own back yards.

We must accept facts, respect the lives of others, forget prejudice, and implicate those who have broken and are still breaking the law. We must form our opinions based only on sources that can provide the most correct information as possible, not by following idols and blindly believing them. We are beginning to realize that no institution is ideal, and that it is human to err, but also to bear the consequences of one's errors. If history teaches life, why is it so easy for us to forget?

The prospects of citizens when it comes to jobs, education, salaries, raising their children, expressing their opinions, behaving according to individual needs, fulfilling the rights of children and people, the prevention of discrimination and of misuse, are by no means at an enviable level.

There are many who see their future outside Serbia, because if they have the funds to complete studies, or lower levels of education, they later have difficulty to find jobs within the vocation they had trained for, unless they have "good connections". Even if they manage to find a job, they are insufficiently paid for their knowledge and work.

The material status is the main reason for people to leave the country; it is also the cause of childlessness, of dissatisfaction among people, of poverty... On the other hand, those who have acquired huge personal wealth by obscure means are seen as capable of running the state, and since power and funds are closely interconnected, they often manage to reach the political summit, where such things are happening that I still am not able to grasp. It is absurd that the plots that must be involved in the smuggling of cigarettes, the assassination of the Prime Minister, mass genocide, harboring killers ... are embellished by names of statesmen who represent our country, who manage our politics, and whom we have elected.

I cannot understand that the majority of a nation is capable of forgetting the painful circumstances under which they lived, having to step over people to get a fistful of bread, and of forgiving. Only then to create an idol of a man and of his "apostles", whose only interest had been their own personal gain; of a man who could craftily lie, manipulate, and above all had the desire to rule.

*The goal is reached either owing
to the flash of a genius,
or by crafty corruption.*

Balzac Pere Gorio

This "principle" is one of the striking differences between the assassinated Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic, who knew how to place us on our feet and pull us out of the mud, and the late Slobodan Milosevic, a Hague indictee, who contributed to our sinking in that mud, and who is now, after his death, once again becoming an idol. I am consoled by the (maybe) illusion that the generations have begun to go their separate ways, and that the young have begun to open their own eyes, and then the eyes of those who are older, and those who are younger than they are.

The fact is that a problem exists. It is in us, in our readiness to severely judge all that is new and unknown, without previously making an attempt to be informed about the issue. It is in our habit to negate irrefutable evidence of crimes perpetrated in the name of us all. It is in our laziness, while at the same time in expecting a job to fall out of the sky, and when it does, in our discontent if it is a job where we in fact must work to earn our pay. We grew up in a patriarchal society, where a woman is a housewife, takes care of children, and is blamed if she has brought them up wrong. We are too willing to accept all the bad things that are western. We enjoy being stubborn against all that can in fact benefit us, only because it is hard for us to change our habits, to become more aware, and to exercise more self criticism. It sometimes seems to me that many of those outside this country are better aware of the situation here than we are. Maybe because there are many currents pulling in different directions,

because foreign media are more objective, because we are in the midst of transition, of changes, of growing up, but still find it easier to watch footage from Srebrenica and say that it is film editing, not believing this ourselves any longer. Many still feel that the Hague Tribunal is a major evil and just one more way to destroy Serbs as a nation. So why don't we then ourselves try those who dictated murder in the name of each and every one of us? Why is it so much easier to deny something that is quite apparent, than to seek forgiveness? Is this not more human and moral? When children leave elementary school the first thing they face is a slap of truth in the face, telling them that we are not the richest, most successful country, as they had thought until then.

Namely, we discover that we are not a country whose political, economic, and social statuses can be defined simply and easily. But regardless of problems, I feel that my country can offer me many quality things, such as education. I think that our people are beginning to realize that they must think and act rationally, that the solution is not to hate each other just because we do not live according to the same tradition, don't speak the same language, because we prepare our Manna differently, and have different color skins.

I feel that the most comprehensive way to resolve our situation is a series of educations, debates, and presentation of true information. We need to learn all over again that we should not form our opinions based on individuals and their way of life, but rather by listening to all sources that offer us the requested information, then discussing the issue with someone, exchanging views regardless of our nationality, and then sorting this out alone in our heads. But again, we should not adhere to these views regardless of the cost, but should offer ourselves the luxury of changing our opinion if we find that some other way is better. It is high time to treat ourselves to the feeling that we are a community, without looking down on those who are a minority, not to judge people based on their appearance and religion. It is much nicer to aspire for democracy, the definition of which carries much tolerance, not discrimination, than to poison the neighbor's dog because it barked at us.

Aleksandra Uskoković

The intriguing issue of truth, guilt, and change in Serbia is the present moment we must deal with. There is much that we do not choose. Necessity connects us to history and to the past, but the present and the future are ours to rule. Young people in our country are not sufficiently informed about events of the past fifteen years. My friends know about the war in Bosnia, about the bombing in 1999, about the Hague Tribunal and the crimes being processed there. They are guessing if what they have heard is the truth, and they present opinions heard from their parents. But they have never asked themselves what the real truth is.

The lack of information or not recognizing the truth are problems that make us all suffer, problems that keep us all from heading to a better future. These are problems that will cause stagnation until we find solutions. For this reason, I wish to know the real truth. I want to know who is guilty. I want a better future for my contemporaries and for myself. I don't want the half-truth that makes us all suffer to be passed on to the next generation. I don't want us to walk in the dark. I want us to face the past and to change our stereotypical views. It is not sufficient only to include state bodies in this process, but also the media, NGOs, and all citizens of good will.

Until 5th October 2000, our country was a small, conservative environment, in which the rule of a regime resembled absolutism of certain countries in the 16th, the 17th, and the 18th centuries. Certain media were very attached to the ruling regime, while those that were objective were not able to inform in fear of being shut down or because of death threats. Those who rebelled lost their jobs, went missing, or were killed. One of the victims of this regime is the journalist Slavko Curuvija, who paid for the truth with his life. The voice of young people, especially students, was not respected, let alone of teenagers who were off limits to questions. Numerous demonstrations were cruelly crushed. Many resulted in victims. Why? Who is to blame? Are

we to blame for asking the question? Are we as a people to blame for not influencing the regime earlier, thus cutting short the long period of suffering, and therefore the demonstrations that resulted? Or is there an individual who is to blame for it all?! But after 5th October the situation changed. Everyone has the right to speak his or her mind. Gone are the social limitations that burdened us. The regime that had isolated us from the world is no more. We are now free. We are beginning to discuss topics that lay forgotten for so long. We are asking new and old questions. We are reassessing our own identity, if it has changed, and to what extent, after all these events in the region of ex-Yugoslavia. Are we able to say who we are? Can we without shame confess that we are Serbs?

Assistance from the free media has offered us new knowledge, has opened up our perspective, or maybe even has shown us what we do not want to see. The media that once exuded hate are now on our side, on the side of the young people, helping us to progress, both psychologically and professionally. Young people have a larger share when it comes to issues of the future. They have turned to themselves and to forming a free viewpoint about problems that are a consequence of the previous regime.

My friends and I have participated in workshops on human rights, tolerance, inter-culturality, and nonviolent communication, which have helped me very much to form my personality and my standpoint, and have given me the freedom to make decisions without external influence.

I am grateful for these changes, however they have set in motion a chain of events that are not pleasant, and that we were apprehensive about. Many dark issues have been opened up about which we were formerly just guessing. An international tribunal was formed for those who ordered and those who perpetrated crimes in this region. When these issues were opened, our country became a headline topic in world media. The dark truth became a dominant factor. All that was, or seemed to us to be beautiful, was gone overnight.

People who had only cared about their own good began to wake up and to ask questions. They demanded answers. They did not want the subjective truth composed by the regime. They

wanted, and they still want, peace in this region, peace in their own country, and religious conflicts to cease as well. They want peace and reconciliation.

This is why I feel that the process of learning the truth, and of reconciliation should be initiated by state bodies, as well as by all citizens of good will. We have had enough of the slow and inadequate facing of facts, and of the lack of readiness of the state to create a more favorable climate to make it as painless as possible to discuss the past, truth, guilt and change. The state must find a solution, and create a plan using the ideas of its citizens. It should form a counseling body that would hold regular meetings to discuss problems and their solutions. Public discussions should be occasionally organized, as well as debates and conferences about results that have been achieved. The media should also elucidate all those topics that need to be faced. Meetings should be organized to discuss war crimes and casualties of war, but also the tremendous material destruction, and economic lagging, whose victims are primarily the young people.

However, citizens must work to better themselves. They must stop with the accusations, the distrust, the intolerance, and the obliterating of crimes for which "historical justification" was sought. We must not think of ourselves as a "holy people", untouchable, infallible, and superior to all others. We must stop history from repeating itself. We must approximate to the young the issue of guilt, distributed by Jaspers into four categories - individual, collective, moral, and political. We must put in an effort to institute an open dialog between opposing parties. Problems should be discussed openly, to stop hatred between Serbs, Croats, Bosnians and Albanians. All young people should learn to distinguish between guilt and responsibility. They must fight and put in an effort on their own behalf, for the future of "the next generation". There will be no excuse if we do not do this. We must stop disregarding warning signs, and our fate should be an example, not a moral to other countries. The past must be elucidated, the truth confessed, the consequences accepted, as well as the punishment for crimes that we were or were not aware of. For an "individual or collective awakening will enable a joyous creation of a future that we desire, and that is our right."

**INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE
AS A MEAN FOR RECONCILIATION**

Ivana Franeta

Religion persisted into the 21st century, the epoch of technological progress and computerization. In spite of the threats of modern society, religion now not only plays a significant role in human life, but also in the life of the state. It greatly influences human conscience, as well as human attitudes towards others. As a kind of foothold in opposition to the cold world of machines, as something that belongs to tradition, religion places itself as a guide of people's identity and hope for a better future. Nevertheless, the issue raised today is if life in a multi-confessional and multiethnic environment is possible at all. Especially if we bear in mind that the previous century was marked by the breakdown of many countries, such as the USSR, Czechoslovakia, Austro-Hungary and, perhaps as the best example, Yugoslavia. The conflicts in the territory of former Yugoslavia were also characterized as inter-religious conflicts. Namely, international tensions were emphasized to a certain degree alongside different religious affiliation of these nations, or national minorities. And now, after everything that has happened, can religion, or dialogue between different religious communities, be the key to reconciliation?

We can say that religion is as old as man, and its development path went from naive worship of objects and phenomena from nature, totemism, through polytheistic religions, to monotheism. However, as different as they may seem, all religions have one common objective. Since the very beginning, the purpose of religion was to give man refuge from the unknown, to guide him as to how to live in harmony with nature and other people, and finally, to give him hope for a better tomorrow. When the first Bible was written, it was originally conceived as a kind of moral code, which was given by God as an almighty being to people to live by. Whether written, or verbal, God's laws always prescribe Good and Love. They are the "words of love" directed to the entire human species. But can true love sometimes be destructive? Unfortunately, today we are the witnesses

an increasing aggressiveness of certain religious communities, and national and religious extremism and exclusion are the causes of numerous conflicts. Such a concept of religion and certainly the abuse of Holy Scriptures disturb interethnic and inter-religious tolerance, and tolerance is what is needed for a true dialogue between the members of different communities. If there is no tolerance, there is no dialogue, only monologue. One-sided communication has never led to solving problems that certainly exist, otherwise there would be no conflicts on the territory of former Yugoslavia.

The breakdown of the former Yugoslavia was a shock for many people. It was unconceivable how friends until yesterday transformed and turned against each other, practically overnight. We "owe" a lot for what has happened to media propaganda. The headlines were filled with the slaughters of Serbian children by Croats and Muslims and vice versa, depending on which television broadcasted the program – each blaming the other party for the crimes. And who is really to blame? We all are. We must understand that there are no winners in war and that everybody loses. If we wish to initiate any dialogue whatsoever, we must confess that we have all participated, directly or indirectly in the war, in which brothers killed each other, and which will forever remain a black spot in the history of our nations. For one nation to start a war means that the majority of that nation voted for the war. And so, manipulated or not, we as a nation are to blame, not only Serbs, but Croats and Bosnians as well. We must confess that collective guilt in order to make that first step towards reconciliation. Only then can it be followed by the long-term process of gaining trust among different communities, both ethnic and religious.

We must begin the dialogue free of prejudice, and the best possible way to avoid it is to be well informed. This often occurs as a problem, since many people are ill-informed and have vague and mostly wrong views about others. As it has been proven in practice, intolerance is a consequence of misguided or insufficient education in a large number of cases. The significance of ecclesiastical learning is emphasized as a significant factor. This is especially important for overcoming ethnic and religious prejudice, especially for those where the hatred of one nation exists

a priori, i.e. the hatred of the members of one religious group towards others. Such propaganda was especially widespread during the twenties in the areas of former Yugoslavia, and such propaganda is to be blamed for creating prejudice and bringing out the worst inside of us. The result is well known. The church should raise the awareness that we are all equal in God's eyes, that all people have the same human, civil and cultural rights, and the mission of "God's emissaries on Earth" should be to spread love, understanding and tolerance.

All religions have something essentially in common: they all represent a kind of moral code and their purpose is to offer man refuge and hope for a better tomorrow. Neither Christianity nor Islam preaches that people kill each other, nor do they justify killing, nor any kind of violation of human rights. This is not the purpose of religion, and any interpretation that violates basic human rights represents the abuse of God's law. We cannot claim that one religion is more righteous than the other, the same way we cannot claim that one language is better than the other, as long as the language fulfills its function in the community in which it exists. We can have our affinities towards one thing, but we cannot deny the other only because we dislike it. After all, isn't democracy the right of every man to choose, as long as he does not endanger the rights of others?

In order to establish quality communication we must observe general human rights, namely the right to freedom of thought and affiliation. Let's listen to others and respect their choice. We are not always right and there is not only one correct decision. We should talk about similarities between religions and not emphasize differences between them. We should learn how to live in harmony with the differences. Just as friendship and love are based on mutual understanding, communication between religious groups leads towards more harmonious relations. Learning from mistakes in the past, we must learn to live in peace with others, to respect them and complement each other.

Therefore, we should not repeat our mistakes, but learn from them. We must come to the solution of the problem together in a common decision from all sides. Dialogue between religions should be a call for humanity. Man is a social being, he cannot exist alone. His place is in the community. Therefore, we

must first learn to love ourselves and then others, since where there is no tolerance and respect, there can be no warmth in human relations, nor any normal functioning of the community, or of the individuals that constitute this community. Let us demonstrate that the Balkan states are finally ready to join the European integrations.

Dunja Poleti

The intellectuals of the nineteenth century were obviously wrong when they predicted that religion would become a marginal factor in modern society, that it would disappear from the social scene and that it would be replaced by reason. Man's need for the transcendental, for the search, both in and outside of his own world, has never disappeared. On the contrary, the end of the 20th century brought us religious revival.

In the countries that abandoned communism and found themselves in the beginning of their transition towards capitalist society, the process of secularization¹ was interrupted. Closer contact and support between state and church opened up ways for religion to be politicized. Specific circumstances in the Balkans surely did not contribute to making the spiritual sphere independent. Religious affiliation, besides a national one, became the most important bearer of human identity. The problem was that the national and confessional borders overlapped, so that confession became not only the sign of religious identity, but also an important part of one's national identity. Henceforth, it was unavoidable that religion would be included in the ethnic conflict on the verge of breaking out.

The fact that confession played an important role in the wars in the nineties means that different religious affiliations can still be the source of possible conflicts and antagonisms. Neither the wish to blame the former religious leaders for their insufficient engagement in preventing the conflicts, nor pining over the fact that religion was abused, can help us much. We need to accept each other the way we are. It can happen only if we have enough wish and strength to get to know each other better, to determine what we have in common and to understand what our differences are. Better understanding of collocutors can be achieved only through dialogue with them.

1) The concept of secularization can have several meanings. Its meaning can be the disappearance of religion or the loss of its social significance, its adjusting to this world, separating of society from religion, as well as transition from holy to secular society (Hamilton, 2003: 306).

National and confessional divisions do exist. Apparently we cannot fight them by denying their existence. No one can deny that there are Muslims, or Catholics, or Orthodox believers or members of any other confession. Even if we fail to declare our affiliations ourselves, still we will not be able to escape classification and being placed into certain categories by others. Deconstruction and overcoming concepts would be “sweeping problems under the carpet”. However, what we can overcome is evaluation of categories. There is no shame in taking notice that someone is Orthodox, or Catholic, or Muslim, or a member of any other confession; it is, however, shame to think that being that “someone” is *a priori* bad. We are not the same. We look differently, we think differently, we worship God differently, but as to the rights and obligations there should be no double standards. That is the aim, and it can be achieved through dialogue.

The concept of dialogue, apart from meaning a conversation between two persons, still has some important characteristics. Quite frequently it is a dialogue on a common topic between two or more persons who can have different points of view. The aim is not to beat the opponent verbally. The essence is that the participants state and justify their attitudes, learn something, listen to each other, but also to adapt to and get closer to each other. Inter-religious dialogue is somewhat specific: the participants not only belong to different religious traditions and confessions, but also have a clear picture of themselves and their religious backgrounds.

Since different religions give basically different views of the world, they can be the source of misunderstanding. On the other hand, no social sphere makes such clear call for tolerance, understanding and forgiving as religion does. The final goal of each religion is to transform human beings. Since religion can determine the course and direction in which it will transform us, it can be a factor of reconciliation. Of course, we must bear in mind that religious communities certainly do not have as much political power as states do, but we must not neglect either moral or symbolic significance to which religious decisions are frequently reduced.

For inter-religious dialogue to be a successful tool for reconciliation, some prerequisites must be met. We should first consider rationally all facts that led to the conflict. We need to understand that we cannot look for responsibility and guilt only in “others”. We must be ready to examine our own roles and face

our own consciences. We need to accept the responsibility not only for the crimes, but for indifference and turning of our heads. Therefore, we need a self-critical spirit. On the other hand, we must consider the value and importance of what is “different”. We must appreciate differences and respect religious, ethnic and political pluralism. Dialogue can be good only if the participants are equal and if they see each other as equal.

The religious issue cannot be reduced entirely to an individual level pushed into the private sphere, rather an initiative must be taken on the level of institutions. People occupying high state and clerical positions are responsible for it. But, will we always wait for an official invitation? Couldn't we do something ourselves, on a small-scale plan, on the individual level? We often fail to see the possibility that we can engage ourselves and not simply wait for someone else to initiate things. There is no excuse for indifference. It is much more difficult to make any kind of personal effort, especially if the results are neither immediately nor clearly obvious. However, if every one of us would make an effort, a smallest one at least, the total effect could be huge.

Evolution is neither good nor bad – it simply is. With electricity, we can kill or use it to make toast. The electricity simply is. Through the Internet, you can distribute children's pornography or meet your future spouse. Internet simply is. Future does not exist. It is neither good nor bad. It will be the way we create it ourselves. “What is – is”, said the Dalai Lama (Nordstrom; Riderstrale, 2004: 48).

Religion simply is. Confessions are. And differences are. But they are neither good nor bad by their nature. They are what we create them to be. And it takes dialogue to do it, and it seems dialogue is still not...

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Andrea Kaitović

*I was a man with what I had yesterday,
and I want to be a man with what I have today,
different, perhaps even the opposite, but it does
not confuse me, since man is change,
and it would be evil not to
take advice when it is given.*

It is hard today, in a time in which we live and struggle for our existence, to be competent and give answers to the burning issues. Religion has not become the igniter only in the 21st century, rather since the beginning of Christianity it has always been a topical problem and it never dies down. Too much innocent blood has been spilt down the rivers of not only Europe but all over the world for preserving and defense of our ideals. Through further presentation it will become clear that the conflicts based on faith occur only with the appearance of Christianity, as a monotheistic religion.

From a historical point of view, the periods of conflicts among different religious traditions in the world, even inside of religions themselves, lasted much longer than their understanding and dialogue. These conflicts, which were usually motivated by some religious disagreements, disputes (even when religion was not the true or only source of war), however, do not necessarily have to have negative connotations. A whole series of unsolved problems within certain traditions started to be solved only when some serious conflicts between certain religious groups or individuals within religious communities were started. On the other hand, it does not necessarily mean that conflict is always desirable, especially if it results in an open confrontation among religious and ethnic communities in an armed conflict or war. Certain wars in history also had religious characteristics.

Dialogue between religious communities is a relatively new phenomenon, and purely from the historical point of view, the period of conflicts between different religious traditions (even within certain traditions) lasted much longer. If we take the Christian Church as an example, we find that the International Committee for Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Roman Catholic believers started to work only in 1980, while the period of conflicts, split within Christianity has lasted since the Middle Ages. The Global Church Council, a leading international organization with the aim of stimulating dialogue among Christians, is, nevertheless, as old as the United Nations. It was founded only in 1948, and since then it has operated with variable success.

Religious communities are now more numerous than nations, and they are all still very close to each other, and yet so different. There is a thin line between love and hate, belief and disbelief. Today all large cities consist of many religions, nations and cultures. The entire world has been transformed into a religious community where different cultures and religions meet in everyday life, i.e. one global network of relations. We are used to living under different influences on which we simply base our identities. Without any exaggeration, religion today represents the most powerful weapon for mass destruction.

The liberal West and the conservative East have always been opposed - Islam and Christianity. With the advent of this new, so-called civilization (by the term "civilization" we mean the period after the Second World War and establishment of the United Nations), people are in search of compromise that includes mutual dialogue of religious communities and establishing general principles.

However, we keep talking about tolerance. Let us be aware that tolerance exists from the moment when someone's human rights are violated, in which I mean to say that the only culprit for the present situation is that religious communities are not sufficiently related to one another.

What does this really mean?

It actually implies that we do not know sufficiently, not only other religions, but our own as well. Incidentally, we can consid-

er introducing religious teaching in the system of high school education as a good move, which actually aims at creating religious tolerance and teaching high school students what religion really means. Let us be honest at least once, that we do not choose religion by ourselves, that it is something we have been given by our birth, just like our parents, or nationality. Still, regardless of this fact, in our lives we choose for ourselves whether to believe in something or not. But the point is not whether we believe or not, but if we live in accordance with our convictions, i.e. if we believe in accordance with the religion we belong to and what we believe in, since believers and atheists do not live their lives in the same way. However, the problem with introducing religious teaching actually implies some other consequences, such as the conflict of dogmatic and critical opinion, between which a gap has been created.

Our aim is to follow changes that happen to us actively and through research, discussion and publishing results to contribute to establishing balance between the achievements of contemporary science and social development with human needs for belief and a stable system of values. That is why many people before me thought that dialogue was the tool for tolerance.

Every one of us has our own way and our own view of the world we live in, and at the end of that, we believe, a lighthouse is waiting for us. It will light the way and show us the direction we should move, i.e. give us precise and clear coordinates.

Og Mandini, in one of his many works, wrote:

“The older we get, the closer and more reasonable the road which once seemed inaccessible and full of obstacles becomes, and the curves which were once boundless, become clearer as we approach our end.”

Actually, dialogue is possible as the result of our differences and ability for critical opinion, which is unique to only humans and which makes us equal in spite of all our differences.

The world learned about dialogue from the ancient Greeks and from the ancient Romans. Greeks did not only talk among themselves, they had talks about their Gods as well: the God of

wine, of love, of wisdom. Admiring Greek Gods, we actually admire Greek culture, in which each God symbolized a certain value, and the supreme God or the “*God of general practice*” symbolized the supreme value, i.e. the entire system of values. Greeks sensed that dialogue not only created wise thought, but that it also built the community as well. The level of knowledge depends directly on the degree of openness: just how much individuals are open for dialogue. The fact is that Greek polytheism did not know what religious wars were, just as they did not know what splits, heresy, etc. were. As we shall see, war is primarily connected to the belief in one God, since believing in one God excludes all others: it is intolerant, militant and easily flammable! It can only claim that its God is the truth and all others are merely illusions: the first announcement of trepidation in culture! Monotheistic faiths prefer to emphasize their advantages over their equality with others. Where there was more than one God, there were also many ways of thinking, belief and behavior: people could breathe more easily, just as they breathed more easily in a multiparty political system than under the reign of a single party. Where we find faith in several Gods, we cannot encounter almightiness of one among them, since there is division of work among them. Therefore, Greeks were aware that many religions and different ways of their expression exist - that is why they always had dialogues with others.

This is understandable, since they had holy books in which truth was written once and for all - that is why they were not dogmatic. They did not have prophets or saviors, so they were not obliged to follow them - that is why they were not fanatic. Their religion was created by poets, not by priests, which is why it enabled dialogue with different views of the world, which had favorable influence on the development of philosophical and scientific thought. Talking about dialogue, without warning that a Christian God was having a conversation with his twelve disciples from the very beginning and with anyone whom he met on his way, covered with thorns, means not only to miss the essence of the Christian concept of love, faith and salvation, but also not to understand the basis of God’s relationship towards man and man’s relationship towards their loved ones.

Djuro Šušnjić wrote an excellent article talking about different kinds of dialogue between the members of different religious communities. In that article he mentions four kinds of dialogues:

1. *dialogue between believers of the same confession*
2. *dialogue between believers of different Christian confessions*
3. *dialogue between believers of different religions (e.g. dialogue between Buddhists, Christian and Islamic believers)*
4. *dialogue between believers and non-believers (or the ones who are indecisive or indifferent to religion)*

In this paper I will focus on the dialogue between believers of different confessions, with the aim of presenting the main topic of my paper in a better way.

In the Koran, the Holy Book of Islamic religion, “taken down from Heaven with a celestial rope“, there is an inscription: “*I create you from one man and one woman and divide you into nations and tribes, so you would get to know each other.*“

Each religion carries a message in itself and each in its own way gives explanations or revelation on the creation of the world. Therefore, talking about which religion is the best is actually pointless, as if we asked which historical period was the best for humanity, since we become enlightened and experience wisdom out of each of them. Or, it would be the same as if we asked a philosopher which philosopher is the most important for the development of philosophy. This question cannot be answered, since each of them introduced something new to it, something that would later help others to build their own theories criticizing the previous ones or elaborating them. If one religion calmly tolerates the other it is actually a reflection of its strength and size and the guarantee of its future.

“The man who respects only his own religion and underestimates the others, is like a man who respects his own mother and despises everyone else’s“.

Obstacles to complete tolerance of different religious communities are numerous, but we should try to build bridges and get to know different religions and by learning to superstructure ourselves and our culture. Dialogue and tolerance are actually the only true and right way to achieve peace and mutual respect in this world, which has had enough of wars and which aspires to global peace without violence, tears and wasted lives.

If the value of religion is not measured by its original or internal meanings, the way they have been given in the revelations, but rather according to derived or external goals, or in a way they suit the interests of individuals and groups, religion becomes betrayed. Nietzsche shouts out: *ideology is a useful way of wrong interpretation of religion! The one who hates in the name of religion commits crime against religion.*

There is an old saying: “*Stay away from the fight, you will err much less.*“ If ideologists of religious communities continue to fight, then their fighting can end in a graveyard silence.

And we are all mortal and we all have problems, religious, political, economic, individual, etc, but who doesn't? If you want to see the ones who have no problems take a walk to the cemetery, for there lay the only people who have no problems any more, or who solved their problems either too early, or too late or on time. We are left to carry our own baggage and to respect mutual differences, which we are actually proud of, with as few conflicts as possible.

The truth is that global history knows much more cases of solving religious problems with conflicts than with dialogue, but is it impossible to open up a new chapter of history and start a new peaceful, no-conflict world order?

Actually, it isn't. All we need is a nice word, for as someone said: “*Nice words never hurt anyone.*“ And not just that. I will go as far as to say that it is essential to get to know and teach other religions and their ways of life, to understand how these people actually function and not to judge each action that is different from our views. “One cannot know oneself without others,“ someone said once. If two ways of thinking, belief and action differ so much that we cannot find a field of mutual understanding,

then the result of dialogue between them cannot be neglected. One religion must not be against the other: if they cannot do it together, then at least they can go along and not against each other. Differences in religions are no longer the basis of intolerance and conflicts, but the cause for understanding and cooperation. Intolerance is incompatible with the original messages of world religions. Max Webber said that in the Hellenic world even nations who were at bitter odds revered the Gods of their opponents and offered them sacrifices. In the modern world of pluralistic beliefs tolerance becomes the measure of a religion's values. Tolerance is a necessary prerequisite in the societies of religious, national and cultural diversity. W. James in the *Diversity of Religious Experience* noticed that:

"The house of our Father has many rooms, so everyone must discover for themselves the kind of religion and the volume of holiness which best agrees with what he finds to be his strength and feels as his true mission and vocation."

If we compare the religions of the world we will establish that the attitudes of understanding, tolerance and love prevail in their teaching. If this is so, and it is, where do then all the hatred, conflicts and wars come from? Obviously these phenomena do not come from religion. Where then do they come from? They come from religious ideology (clericalism, nationalism, etc.) - when faith is put in the service of limited interests. Therefore, the holy words of the founders of world religions do not contain anything that would resemble intolerance, hatred and war. If war were to depend on religion, there would be no war, since religions as a rule believe in peace. All world religions have adopted the golden rule **"do no harm to others which you would not want others to do to you"**.

We are facing an important and difficult task: we must learn to practice dialogue and tolerance, since all our troubles come from the fact that we do not know how to have a tolerant conversation. Only with an upbringing consisting of dialogue and tolerance can we acquire consciousness that others are our complements, and not our hell. The one who is not tolerant cannot be human: he still has not grown to the human level! In order to

do so, he must listen to different voices of time and different ways of speech, since only in that way he has the ability to compare, choose and create. That is why Johan Hoizinga was right to say: "We keep our windows open for every wind."

The learned theologian Hans King warns us that the relationship between different religions developed from ignorance through arrogance to tolerance! This can also be understood in this way: more one beside another and one against the other, than one with another! There are a lot of common things, but there is no unity; no one is against, but everyone sticks to their own; there are gatherings, but there is no action. We get closer to each other, but there is no love. There are symbolic implications, but no real attempts. There are alleviations of conflicts, but there are no real attempts. There is forgiveness, but there is no forgetting. These meetings are not the meetings of believers but only of religious institutions and their representatives, so they resemble acting rather than reality.

"I call upon the ink holder and pen and what is thereby written to be my witnesses,

I call upon the uncertain darkness of dusk and night and everything it revives to be my witnesses,

I call upon the moon when it is full and dawn when it whitens to be my witnesses,

I call upon the judgment day and soul which reprimands itself to be my witnesses,

I call upon time, beginning and ending of all things to be my witnesses – which every man always loses!"

Taken from the Koran

“I believe in one God, Father, almighty, creator of Heaven and Earth and all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, single born, born by Father before all ages. The light of lights, the God true, born, uncreated, the same with Father, through which everything was created...”

Taken from the Bible

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Emilija Džaja

Inter-religious dialogue is a specific kind of discussion. The participants of the dialogue are the representatives of different religious communities discussing a certain religious topic, either directly or indirectly, in writing or verbally. For this kind of dialogue to be possible at all, and if we want to achieve a positive and successful result, all its participants need to be aware first of all of their own culture, history and tradition. Each of these participants should have clear images about themselves, their own identities, to be self-critical, to be aware of their own and other people's religious freedoms and to make an effort to protect them as their own. It is impossible to create any kind of inter-religious dialogue if we are unwilling to admit to ourselves that there is not one truth only, i.e. that what we believe in is not the only thing that is true and correct. Therefore, one must be ready to view others as objectively as possible, to begin dialogue free of any prejudice and stereotypes. We must be ready to respect and appreciate differences.

The fact that we are different is what makes the dialogue possible; if we were equal, there would be no need for us to meet, there would be no “us” and “them”. Our views of the world are simply different, but we need to start from the fact that we are all equal participants, at least in the dialogue, and that we cannot come forward in an authoritarian manner. We must not try to impose our own view of the world on others, we must not come out with the attitude that we are superior to others, we must not think about others as unsophisticated savages to whom we should instill faith and show the proper way to salvation.

The best examples of bad communication can probably be found between the Islamic religion and civilization on one side and a western (multicultural) civilization on the other side on the territory of former Yugoslavia.

Ever since the 7th century, the encounter with Islam in Europe actually meant one on the battle field. The idea of

Muslims as uncivilized Barbarians originates from the times of the Crusades. Since the beginning of the 20th century, large areas of the Islamic world were colonized by western countries. Many Muslims experienced this as an attack on Islam, since Muslim citizens had an extremely limited influence on political and economic life. The colonial forces advocated the breakthrough of the western educational system, wherefrom western ideals would further be spread over Islamic society. The challenge of secularization represented a great problem. That is to say, most frequently there is no clear distinction between religious community (ulema) and the state in Islam. The community is always above the individual.

In the non-Muslim world there is a prejudice that Muslims are harsh and violent towards others. The stories of Muslim extremists and terrorists are launched through media as if all Muslims were the same and as if Islamic learning promoted violence, especially after the attack on America.

In Eastern Europe, i.e. in the communist societies, religion and state were formally separate. The authorities, under the influence of socialist ideology, made great efforts to suppress religion and instill an atheistic culture instead. Still this process did not have the same characteristics in all socialist societies. We can talk about Albania, USSR, Bulgaria and Romania, where the state was extremely intolerant towards religion on one side, and about Yugoslavia, Poland or Czechoslovakia, on the other side.

The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional society, but at the same time it was an extremely secular society, which still cherished the idea of brotherhood and unity. The policy of Yugoslav spirit resulted in the failure to notice crucial national differences, since there were no explicit exhibitions of different religious orientations, and religious differences were never noticed. The return of Yugoslav nations to their religions took place under the conditions of long-lasting economic, social and political crisis. When in the late 80s and early 90s religion was undergoing a sudden revival, people began to notice and exhibit differences, but also show great intolerance and exclusivity across all levels.

So, we were no longer Yugoslavs, we no longer believed in brotherhood and unity, now we were Serbs, Bosnians and Croats, or Orthodox, Muslim and Catholic. We do not speak, nor have we ever spoken, the same language.

But the revival of religion and religious consciousness did not occur *per se*, what we were dealing with was politization and nationalization of religion. The thriving of nationalism was what led to the revival of religiousness.

In unstable social conditions people tend to feel insecure and make easy targets for manipulation. People are constantly in search of an identity that will give them strong moral and emotional support. Religious and national identities in that sense are most vulnerable to attacks and denials and so they mobilize hatred and intolerance in the easiest and fastest way.

We cannot expect that time will take care of everything, that all the pain we inflicted upon each other will disappear one fine day after the eclipse of the Sun or the Moon, when our consciousness and our memory will be eclipsed as well, when we will forget everything that was going on in the past. All parties must take interest in the dialogue, show readiness for unbiased insight into the facts and events that preceded the conflict and kept it alive. We must show readiness to view and evaluate our own roles and responsibilities for the conflicts realistically, and not merely look for the guilty ones in others.

If we want to realize peaceful cohabitation, we must overcome the idea of discrimination and take care not to violate and sacrifice our own as well as other people's integrity at the same time.

Srdan Atanasovski

For a historian, the thesis that religion is one of the most significant generators of conflicts and divisions among people is too easy to defend. It would suffice to consider the social role and position of the Christian church (or churches) – the institution that aspires to the position of the Earth's representative of one of the most humane Gods man has ever created. As if the priests, hiding behind their robes, have forgotten what Christ was preaching, teaching them to love their enemy and to turn the other cheek when they get hit – they forgot this when they sent their knights on the Holy Crusades, when they stirred up religious conflicts at the age of counter-reformation, when they persecuted the Moors and Jews in Catholic Spain, and finally, when they gave their blessings to soldiers in the bloody-minded war in Bosnia and Croatia, and came forward in public with guns instead of crosses.

There is not a single religion in the world that in its books fails to write the messages of love, and yet there is no religion in the world that at a certain point failed to become an ideological mainstay in a bloody conflict. I suppose that the people who looked at the hand of the clock that marked the beginning of the new century a hundred and six years ago expected all but a new and never stronger confirmation of this thesis. The 20th century was supposed to be a century in which knowledge – progress in science – would rule over human misjudgments and open up the door to free progress. Instead, the knowledge of the 20th century proved to be a murderous weapon of the bloody-minded ideologies in open conflicts, raising even doubt in the sense and existence of humanity itself. The wars of the past century took far more victims than the bloodiest conflicts the world has ever experienced so far. Religion played the role of ideological background in the most ruthless of these wars once again. The process of desecularization largely marked the second half of the century; the conflicts which represented a political awakening of Islam – in Chechnya, Pakistan, Nigeria, Cyprus, East Timor and

Israel – as well as the conflicts of nations with cognate cultures, but opposing confessions – in Northern Ireland and in the former Yugoslavia, certainly closest to us – evidently abused religion and stirred up hatred.

Nevertheless, the twentieth century knew how to recognize religion as the field of human activity which could be a peace factor. The change of policy of the Nobel Committee in this direction makes a clear statement thereof. The evaluation of this committee that religion is becoming a significant factor when it comes to global peace became clear in the late 70s when in 1979 Mother Theresa received the Nobel Prize for peace. The Nobel Prize for peace was again awarded for religion three more times: in 1984 when Bishop Desmond received it during the time of apartheid in South Africa, which was an ideal example of the politicization of religion, or “religization“ of politics as compatible processes in the areas of crisis; in 1989 the Nobel Prize winner was the Dalai Lama; while in 2004 one of the nominees was Pope John Paul II. The missionary travels of John Pope II were, by the way, of great importance for inter-religious dialogue – visits to Moscow, Kiev, official visits to a synagogue and mosque (which had never been done by any Pope until then).

In the past twenty years in the areas surrounding us, religion has fundamentally changed its role and position in society at least once. With the breakdown of the so-called socialist organization, atheism fell from the pedestal of “state orientation“ and the prerequisite that every individual is politically active. The fact that atheism, if not religious declarations, then at least a declaration on religion, was one of the cornerstones of the ideology of social organization now a part of history, significantly conditioned the role of religion in the post-socialist – transitional – society. With a return to religion, the individual now becomes politically active, and religion becomes one of the most important items in the political program and the instrument for achieving certain goals, sometimes on the level of daily intrigues.

The impulse for creating national states had a much more disastrous influence on the role of religion. While the process of creating national states in Europe was ended by the Treaty of Versailles, on the territory of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, or what had been known as the Kingdom of Serbs,

Croats and Slovenes, it started to take effect only in the last decade of the 20th century. The information is a paradox if we bear in mind that at that moment the concept of limited sovereignty clearly prevailed in global history. However, this role was far from unknown to religion itself; it has always been a natural ally of romantically colored movements, which in their manifests stated the creation of an independent national state as their objective, referring to the heroic past of their nations.

Still, there are no examples in European history to which we can compare the fundamental role religion played in this process in our areas. Confession has played a key role in the division of nations in these areas since ancient times. The affiliation to different confessions represents the most obvious difference between the nations sharing the Serbo-Croatian (or Croatian-Serbian) formation of language. The language itself is relatively homogenous if compared to other South Slavic nations and its variants do not reflect well their national affiliations. Tradition and customs also intertwined: all republics of the SFRY were multiethnic (SFRY had around 20 ethnic groups), and the culture that developed from the foundation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was gradually becoming aligned. Due to the dissatisfaction with the identity of the Yugoslav spirit, religion became the pivot of the search for national identity.

However, in cooperation with its newly created political engagement, it easily became the ideological bearer of bloody conflicts directed towards the creation of national states. Has anyone made a distinction between the sound of the church bells and the sound of machine guns? Once involved in the war, religion could not step away from it. In crisis situations, such as war, members of society became increasingly religious. The fact that it was especially prominent on the borders between confessions, which were defending the creation of national identities, is not surprising. The valleys of the rivers Drina, Neretva and Una in the 90s turned into mass graves – graves not merely of human lives, but also graves of human messages that religions preserved as dead letters preaching books.

Today when the conflict has ended, one question is raised - how to resurrect the messages of love the religions surrounding

us carry inside of them, without calling upon the spirits of hatred – since these spirits have just been buried. Another question, not frequently posed, should be raised – how to accept religion as a part of our society (once again) without the bitter taste of blood. The messages of love are the messages that can overcome all differences, in terms of religion, nation and language. All we need to do, however hard it might be today, is to say this to them sincerely, in our own language, in our mosques, or in our churches. This is the basis for a discussion based on mutual understanding and respect. The fact that they are contained in religion makes this kind of dialogue not only more attainable, but far more probable as well.

From the view point of pragmatism, the question if this world (or, if we limit the subject of discussion, our immediate surroundings) would be more peaceful or militant with or without religion, makes no sense. Religion is a part of our cultural surroundings. The question we must rightfully ask is how to direct its force towards building peace. With the aim of answering this truly socially useful question, considering the ambivalent role of religion in the history of human conflicts, provides precious knowledge. My wish is that it be used in the most humane (- most Christian – most Islamic -) way.

Milijana Trifković

Humans have an innate wish for permanent existence; human nature finds it strange and crushing to resign with the transience, with the fact that we disappear forever after our bodies die and that there is no “second chance” for our mortal souls.

The power of religion is based on the human fear of transience, on the human need for lasting. Creating an illusion on human indestructibility in time, religions have made themselves indestructible; they persisted even when the empires under whose auspices they were created disappeared. The magical attraction of the consolation made them influential creators of history, awesome or ghostly depending on their choice of aims.

Looking back at the role religions and religious communities have had throughout history, the issue of their influence is raised today. Do religions have power and readiness to change human reality? Can inter-religious dialogue lead to solving the conflicts not solvable with other methods?

We must not fool ourselves - religion is neither the cause nor can it be the solution of all contradictions of the modern world. However, at the same, we must never lose from our sights the power of religion, and with it the power of consolation. We must ask ourselves how many nations there are close in language, history and civilizations, with religion as the only factor separating them.

If we cannot dispute the significance of religious communities in the past, why should we deny any possibility of their influence on the change of social consciousness and reconciliation of mutually conflicted groups? Faith has given courage to people so many times when they went to wars. Why can't it be the motivator of different social processes? Knowing the power of religion and power of human need for it, we should not dismiss the possibility arrogantly. But even if we accept the possibility of influence of religious communities on today's conflicts, another issue

is raised - the problem of their readiness to be the bearers of reconciliation. Are religious communities ready for dialogue, even if it carries inside the silent confession that there is not only one truth - their truth?

Up to a certain point it would be a paradox to expect that any religious community would depart from its pretensions to exclusive truth. Such a compromise is necessary for them though, for as with the opposite case, they would lose their justification. Religious communities would have to accept a certain paradox, deny their learning, the status of an absolute in exchange for another step towards tolerance, towards reconciliation. That wilful defeat for religions is imperative, a concession for further existence. If religions continue to be the forces of separation, there is always a danger that man, in his distance, will consider their dark sides and not see the words of consolation and love, but the theories void of social justification, theories whose most obvious consequences are conflicts. Religious communities must understand that their learning, interpreted as it has been so far, will not be able to last any longer, only owing to the uncertain consolation and deceptive sense they offer. Without a constructive role in the “earthly” social processes, in the absence of rational and ethical justification, the power of religious communities will start to crush down and disappear. Only by choosing peace as its aim can religion justify its existence. The messages of peace already exist in the root of religion - we only need to look back at them. The essence and the contents of religious learning does not exclude each other, so compromise will not mark their end. One nation's God will not disappear if we accept the possibility that other nations give other names to supreme values, which are, basically, the same for all. We need to give advantage to the attributes given to the supreme being, and not only its name; to understand that there are certain universal ideas in the basis of each religion, common for all of humanity. That simple contemplative process is sufficient enough to erase all borders and gaps religions have created among nations and to return to pacifism as the basis of each religion, at least in their beginning. In spite of different forms and interpretations taking turns throughout their existence, all religions are interwoven with extremely humanistic oriented ideas

and principles, which are totally opposite to the ones of extremist and imperialistic movements. The return to these original religious principles is absolutely necessary, since all conflicts, in spite of their seeming multitude of causes and results actually have only one true motivator and winner – the ideology of hatred. Religions have too often served this kind of ideology. Religion throughout most periods of history has been marked by repression, persecution for thinking differently, and most of all, dividing people into “brothers” and “others”. Such order of things today is unacceptable and religious communities are starting to realize that. Undoubtedly, in spite of all false beliefs, there have been some truly positive pursuits within religions, but only in the last decades are those starting to be neglected. Finally the religious communities are aware of their own power and responsibility. They are finally starting to see the necessity of compromise and concessions. Their condemnation of conflicts is getting harsher and the significance of that condemnation surpasses the strength of any political instrument by far. Undoubtedly, religious communities have used the power of that condemnation not as close enough as they should have, they still have not accepted their responsibility entirely. We are starting to discern their readiness for discussion and that is where we should see the way to overcome many conflicts. To deny such possibility would be to accept the fact that antagonism and hatred are primordial, indestructible human characteristics and that there really are conflicts which, having been created once, are left out of human reach. Such pessimism and indifference are inadmissible. The instruments to overcome conflicts so far have been wrong, but it does not mean that reconciliation is impossible, only that we need to change the way. Where reasonable explanations have been defeated, we should offer the possibility for the effect of “surreasonable” - give opportunity to religious communities to take over the role of reconciliation and try to erase with words the differences that have been created with words. The process is slow and, apparently, doomed to fail, especially bearing in mind the strength of hatred in the background of some conflicts. But, observed through the history of religions, can we deny any significance they might have today? They have left the most humane testimonies, spreading ideas of love and equality before God, but also the examples of genocide such as Bartholomew’s

Night and extermination of the Cathars. Experience has shown us that faith is the power which should only be directed in a desired direction. Religions can continue to deepen the already existing differences, or, at least when it comes to some conflicts, come closer to reconciliation than we would ever be able to with some other tools. For where the influence of reason, law, consideration, philosophy, and politics ends, is where the influence of religion on human consciousness is the greatest. In human existence, belief gives the sense that cannot be provided by reason, and that is why man can never so unconditionally be devoted to reason as to religious rapture. When all causes of reason become unconceivable, belief can still influence human consciousness and guide human actions. Reason is sometimes unable to give people anything but a scary truth. On the other hand there are no concessions to which man is ready in exchange for the promise offered to him by religion. Until we realize that and take advantage of that realization, conflict will be an important part of our reality. Only inter-religious dialogue can build a sense of unity among people, make peace their need, the aim they are aspiring to, and not the state of unity imposed by force. It is impossible to explain to people what they should feel – the feeling should be created and that is where reason has no power. Certain conflicts can be overcome only through dialogue between religious communities, when two religions meet. Such kind of act appears not only as the need of the contemporary world, but of religions themselves. It is the only possible redemption of their past and the only justification for their existence in the future.

Sanja Kanazir

There are many national minorities of different religious affiliations. Unfortunately, we are frequently told that Serbia is the country of Serbian Orthodox people only, and all other religions are considered to be hostile and unwelcome. Such opinions have led to open religious conflicts, not only within Serbia, but in the relationship between Serbia and other countries. The war is over and it was such that everyone suffered. However, after the war ended, after great losses and much suffering, the issues of guilt, justice and cohabitation of individuals with different affiliations in Serbia was raised. One part of society has an extremely negative attitude towards differences and insists aggressively on creating Serbian nationalism as the only way of survival. However, this is not the only possibility. Not everyone thinks so. Therefore we should help the ones who think differently, the young people who will lead the country into the future. They are the ones who will take the greatest responsibility for the mistakes they did not make themselves. For this to be as painless as possible, we should help them, so that Serbia does not become the state of Serbian people, but the one of the Serbian nation, so that it does not become a state that rejects other religious communities, but accepts them as a part of their personal cultural path.

What I see as a part of a potential solution can be found in education. My proposal is to introduce the subject Civil Education in elementary and secondary schools. This subject already exists, but we should introduce it in such a way so that it is regarded as a serious subject. It should not be, as is now the case, a subject taught as the last, seventh class on Tuesdays, attended by no one and which is taught by incompetent people who are also not convinced in the importance of the task given to them. I believe it must be a mandatory subject, in the form of workshops and discussions held among young people. My recommendation is that experts, psychologists and sociologists teach this subject, the ones who wish to explain socio-political

circumstances in Serbia since the end of the Second World War, who would give the opportunity to everyone to make a statement and motivate each student, not only to say what they think, but also to hear the other side out. I think it would be useful if the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Ministry of Education initiated the process of dialogue and listening to people. This, of course, is not easy, especially since parents convince children that they are the only ones who are right. Young people should be taught to think with their own heads based on what they see and hear themselves. That is why guest lecturers, people young and old, who belong to different religions and who have different life attitudes and are willing to share their attitudes with others, should be invited to these classes. Special attention should be paid to the period of the nineties of the last century and everything that has happened. Also, we should learn what led to the great gap and apparently unbridgeable differences among people who used to live in the same state. I say apparently, because everything can be solved if there is a will for team work. The will must exist since it is the aim of democratic Serbia and its society to overcome differences and create new ground for building peaceful relations. I cannot claim that in the past people thought differently, but they were compelled to accept their differences, without understanding their essence. Today this should change. By introducing Civil Education into the curriculum students should be taught something. They must be acquainted with the history of development of customs and culture of Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim and Jewish people, and all others who live in our immediate surroundings. This society has not been taught tolerance, and tolerance is the essence.

A part of the plan for introducing civil education would also be related to organizing roundtables and excursions. It is essential to try to make religious topics closer to as many people as possible and perhaps to impose onto them certain attitudes in terms of their frequency in public. It is more than obvious that people in Serbia see and do everything through politics, and politicians do little to make religious hatred stop. They abuse people's powerlessness and ignorance and justify events and people who are not worthy of that. Many people will say that Serbs defended themselves in Bosnia, that Croats are Nazi

killers and that “all Kosovo Albanians should be killed.” This sounds really bad, and we should make these kinds of opinions become our past. Evidently there is a way to reach not the truth, but consciousness about it. We cannot make differences based on a population group, based on someone’s name or baptism. The essence is in the individual, in what one person as such can say, think or do. That is why Civil Education is a civil duty, and we must really start working on creating citizens and people who are willing to compromise.

In certain issues progress is visible. Namely, the research of the Center for Empirical Research from Novi Sad shows that 60.8 percent of respondents in Vojvodina are religious. One third of them are not religious, but claim to be tolerant towards the ones who are believers, whereas only 1 percent of respondents are opposed to any religion. This speaks clearly about the possibility of reshaping the social structure in all of Serbia, not only in Vojvodina, in which the greatest number of people of different religious affiliations live. Obviously there are people who think in a pragmatic way and who try not to see problems where they actually exist. But every day we also meet the ones who refuse to accept the fact that they do not know enough about the things and people they judge. Therefore we should insist on changes in the educational system that will lead to young people growing up understanding that, no matter what, all people deserve to live in any state they wish, since everyone suffers and experiences the world in the same way.

Civil education carries the possibilities of simulating situations as well as finding solutions. It is important to get to know everything that is happening and what we are not aware of through discussion, so we do not make the same mistakes that the previous generations made as the result of their ignorance.

Nevena Gojković

Religion is a constituent factor in the history of humanity. In spite of predictions of many eminent scientists, such as Sigmund Freud, Karl Marx and Emil Dirken, on the loss of significance, even disappearance of the *opium for people* and *collective neurosis of humanity*, as well as the secularization process which has lasted undoubtedly, with its ups and downs, since the age of Enlightenment, in the past two decades the process has reversed.

The end of the century brought several significant turns of events. After the Iranian revolution in 1979, *political Islam* has awoken in areas of the Arab world. At the same time, ecumenical processes, which began with the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), were also gaining power. Finally, with the fall of communism the people of Central and Eastern Europe restructured their identity, largely with a return to faith and Church.

Although in the 20th century an opinion prevailed that the pre-modern period, in which religion explained and structured the world, had ended, these last decades have clearly shown that religious communities still play an important role.

In this paper, I will be dealing with the area of former Yugoslavia, in which a religious revival took place in the moments of deep political, economic, social and moral crises. Since the Balkan peninsula, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina, is a place where three great world religions meet, and where nations are determined along confessional lines, with the disintegration of Yugoslavia, political and forced religiousness returned. Religious communities did little to alleviate the crisis, and during the war they did not insist enough on the termination of animosities. Politicians were manipulated with religion, while at the same time spiritual people aspired to deal with politics. However, religious communities today can make an important contribution to the process of reconciliation. My primary thesis

is that the tool for reconciliation must start with each party facing its own responsibility for the conflict and its own crimes.

Religious communities and their activities on the territory of former yugoslavia

The war on the territory of former Yugoslavia was not waged because of religious issues, but religion was certainly involved in the conflict as a result of national identities being made equal to religious identities. The identity was redefined through differences with respect to other persons, denial of each individual by their immediate neighbors by denying their common culture, tradition, origin, even language, while at the same time placing them on the pedestal of their community. However, it is necessary to separate pseudo-patriotism and pseudo-religiousness from any true love for the homeland or authentic piety. Before dialogue can start, each religious community would have to clear the fundamentalism within itself. We need to be self-critical and as much as possible study the events which led to the present state of things, as well as accept our own guilt, in the degree in which it exists. Therefore, one must start from oneself, relativizing and criticizing one's own perspective. I doubt the success of dialogue, unless it is one initiated by the Serbian Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church and Islamic Community each reexamining their own responsibilities.

Besides, I feel that the basis of dialogue is the knowledge of one's own and other people's religious tradition. During communist Yugoslavia, few people knew anything about religious studies, a majority declared themselves to be atheists. With the disintegration of the state, suddenly a huge number of believers appeared, unfortunately without any religious education whatsoever. For any dialogue to be possible, believers first must be taught about their religious tradition within their own community, teaching them to respect and tolerate the members of other communities. Learning about the principles on which other people's religions, traditions and customs are based would eliminate many prejudice and stereotypes, tendencies to generalize and the division of people into *us* and *them*. My opinion is that the duty of religious communities is to develop respect and sensitivity of their believers for what is different.

Religious communities are ethnic communities at the same time. Since written sources, both Muslim and Christian speak of non-violence, and since Muslims respect the Bible apart from the Koran, I believe there should be no obstacles with regard to harmonizing common universal ethical principles. Believers should be taught a culture of non-violence and solidarity within their own community.

Also, organizing frequent meetings at the local and regional level can be significant. That way the members of one religious community would gain the experience of the *others*, i.e. they would gain direct insight into another religion. I feel that contacts and meeting members of different religious and national communities, which would neither deny nor make mutual differences absolute, but rather make an effort to overcome them, would significantly contribute to building trust, diminishing prejudice and creating a favorable climate for peaceful and quality coexistence. If individuals and communities are open to learning about each other, they are willing to tolerate differences and protect other people's human rights and freedoms, and little space is left for conflict.

It is important to emphasize that religion must not be abused for political purposes. Since the Balkan states aspire to build civil societies in which pluralism in every sense would be respected, religious communities need to understand their roles in such societies and to have a final separation from the state, not just a formal one.

In the end, I would like to conclude that the necessary prerequisite for reconciliation is that religious communities begin the dialogue with sincerity and good will for forgiveness and learning from the mistakes of the past. In my opinion, the most important thing is to raise future generations in the spirit of tolerance and understanding, since only then can reconciliation can be completed. Establishing connections must not be only with words or a mere *façade*. We can truly solve the Balkan situation only if we consider all factors that led to the conflict. We must not forget the mistake we made after the Second World War when crimes were not discussed in public and criminals were never brought to justice. All problems not solved now will later appear in a more acute form. The gap created between our nations is too

deep to be overcome within one generation. The process of reconciliation must be understood to be long-term and be worked on patiently for years. I hope that in the process of European integrations, with help from a united Europe and the rules it brings, we will finally be able to cut the Gordian knot of ever repeating conflicts in the Balkans.

Nikola Bakić

*“Inter-religious relations were
the elementary school of Christianity.
International relations should
become the Christian university”¹*

“...Atheism is humanism”²

We live in the time of a consumer civilization and overall globalization, at the time of the internet, in the atomic-technological age, and apparently, the age of the apocalypse, the age when the average human, “nominal believer“, is so busy creating his own happiness that he has no time for God or for loved ones, and when the words such as ecstatic and kenotic love, presented best as exemplified by the story of the Good Samaritan, are no longer marginalized, but represent pure archaisms.

Still, the age of globalization sets different criteria. If, as illustrated best by the quotation above, inter-human relations were elementary, basic ones, then international relations are what are probably yet to come. In that sense, dialogue can be viewed as a secondary school and entrance examination for the Christian university, if not something more in that educational curriculum.

I think that it is of crucial significance to define the word dialogue. Dialogue could be defined as an open discussion between two parties, discussion “tête á tête“, face to face, taken with the aim of solving certain problems. Defined in this way, we could say that dialogue aims at some kind of compromise; however, it means the acceptance of compromise based on coopera-

1) Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, the Agony of Church, see: On Europe, the Church Gazette, Valjevo 2003, page 129

2) Pavle Evdokimov, Crazy Love of God, Monastery Hilandar 1993, page 11

tion and improvement of relations, but not when it comes to learning. In general, its aim is ethical and not dogmatic.

Confused by frequent failures of various talks we often raise the paradox of the French saying that the more humanity changes, the more it stays the same, to see if it is more topical in our times than ever before. On the other hand, are our present theological thoughts, so to say “petrified“ or is it only that we are not able to respond to the challenges of present times? We often remain silent to these and similar questions, as well as that of the existing problem of the Balkans, the Cain syndrome and grievous events from the end of the last century we all witnessed. The past wars, in the opinion of Dimitrije Kalezić³, were neither confessional nor religious, but anti-confessional and anti-religious, and like a volcano what surfaced had been suppressed years ago. Confessional and religious difference served, to put it this way, only as something to which all kinds of ideas and goals could easily be added. In that context we can talk about identifying faith and nation in favor of the latter. The epilogue of the story is well known to all of us.

From the Orthodox point of view, the horizontal relationship we have towards other people and the vertical relationship we have towards God must be connected. Hence the attitude of the Orthodox Church towards dialogue with the aim of reconciliation is always positive and open because the **tolerance imposed by dialogue represents the Gospel minimum, the bridge and the rainbow, the path towards the Gospel maximum**, towards a Man-God. It seems this can be illustrated best by the *polijelej* in the Ružica Church in Kalemegdan, made of the remnants of ammunition and swords found in these areas, dedicated to all soldiers killed in the First World War.

Moving persistently along that narrow path, coordinating in a different gravity, coming towards the Sun of Transformation, is that minimum, since it is indeed a small step for man, but a large step for humanity.

3) Dimitrije Kalezić, Religious and Civil Wars, see: COLLECTION of the Kruševac philological-literary school, Bagdala, Kruševac 1999, page 110

Dialogue in that sense requires love, love in the widest possible sense of the word, for it is often with the absence of that love that some offer up only surrogates of equality and humanism. However, we should point out that this is not just a sort of abstract love for humanity, since this kind of love is vain self-love. Rather it is a specific kind of love for man, man as a person. However rough it may seem, the entire range of concepts such as humanism, philanthropy, altruism and democracy - are only a set of synonyms devoid of meaning and significance without a love for God. Therefore: “atheism is humanism“.

Peace, one of the words most frequently used in the Holy Scriptures and Liturgy, does not tolerate any kind of inappropriateness and hypocrisy. Still, our era is filled with all kinds of “peacemakers“. This paradoxical fact simply defeats us with its truthfulness. However, the key to solving this problem is not hidden in big political moves of the present. “Apophatic theology and the concept of symbols represent golden keys for each dialogue and the way to avoid the break between the heavenly vertical and earthly horizontal“⁴, a way in which to realize a dialogue without losers.

One of the most frequent complaints and obstacles to such dialogue is the claim that with dialogue man steps further away from his faith, which is only one in a long line of utopias of our times – a kind of Santa Claus for adults. Such a view is wrong in its roots; on the contrary, with dialogue man is confirming his personal religious belief, while also becoming more open for relationships with others. This is especially important because, as professor Vladeta Jerotić excellently put it, “fear is deeply connected to our fanaticism and intolerance“⁵, and indirectly with the aggressiveness that follows. Dialogue is not just some modernized building of the tower of Babylon and it has no such pretensions to be such. We would be more accurate to say that it is one more modern form of cooperation, and yet it does not rep-

4) Pavle Evdokimov, aforementioned work, page 21

5) About this issue, see especially similar articles: “Spirituality and tolerance“ and “On religious fundamentalism today“; Vladeta Jerotić, Faith and nation, Ars Libri, Belgrade 1999, page 152

resent any kind of novelty, since there have been many such attempts and meetings throughout history.

Between utopia and chaos, the ideal and the real, the issue of realizing dialogue readily awaits our reply. The issue is raised on just how ready we are for it and how ready we are to give up monologue and polemics, as well as extremes and obstacles to each sound dialogue. An everlasting message sent to all people some 2000 years ago still remains until its final solution: **“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God” (Mt. 5, 9).**

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The main goal of this paper is not to convince or delve into, and even less to systematically and thoroughly cover the topic of dialogue, since such an enterprise would require several years of work by a group of authors. I should rather say that the main task is more modest. I am trying to try to present and explain the main turning points of modern dialogue observing them through the prism of the Christian (read: Orthodox) view of the world. How successful the author has been is left up to the reader to decide. Still the emphasis, as Metropolitan Jovan Zizijulas once put it in a similar way, is placed not on proposing a ready made solution, but merely on certain contemplations.

Slobodan Vasić

Dialogue as a form of meeting and presenting different conceptual orientations and views of the world in the history of development of human society has a civilized purpose, since it has been the way of harmonizing different, frequently opposite opinions. Continuing to develop is a main characteristic of human society in its transformation of society and social consciousness, first from indeterminism to the state of determinism. By way of similitude, dialogue as a civilized achievement transgresses its original forms embodied in the spontaneity into its modern institutional form, thus becoming one of the main prerequisites of democratic societies, since democracy in its essence lies on harmonizing differences and pluralism of political interest.

When we talk about dialogue, we inevitably enter a discussion about identity, since it includes at least two sides reflecting two attitudes, and accordingly, two identities. What is the prevailing nature of identity in these areas? It is characterized by the prevailing awareness of differences, where the *I* has been united into homogenous *We*, and *We* and *They* find their relationship in a rigid existential form, testifying that the identity, according to its characteristics is fragmented above all. The issue is not that *We* do not recognize that the *Other one* does not exist, but that it does not accept to comprehend it as a possibility, that it does not recognize the legitimacy of its existence. So, *We* remains (or becomes) trapped inside itself. Its dialogue is called monologue. We have witnessed this form of social consciousness observing the participants of historical (political) events with regard to the disintegration of the SFRY and its disastrous consequences. Now we can say that that time is (just) behind us, that we see its consequences in our everyday private lives, and that the consciousness, at least colloquially, is in the process of transition. This means that we are in the middle of the phase called the crisis of identity. In the middle of a crisis without the dimension of value, it signifies neither the end nor disaster, but rather the period which begins when one model of interpretation of the world is

exhausted, and where a new one has not been created. Only the outcome of such a process can be characterized in terms of value, as either positive or negative. The positive outcome of the crisis of the search for identity means the achievement of higher quality. And that is what we are hopefully aspiring to.

In the words of Max Webber, the sphere of culture is a battlefield of constant struggle between different affiliations with regard to values, i.e. there is no irreconcilable struggle between different *most extreme* possible points of view towards life and that we must choose between them. It is a conflict between Gods. If this is so, what is the role of dialogue in the social (cultural) life? It cannot be absolutely reconcilable, but it can influence bringing these most extreme possible points of view of life closer together and understanding them. But let us go back for a moment to the war events in order to “get the grip” of the logic of social relations. In war, which is characterized by the absence of safety, organization and by a state of chaos, the individual is trying to find refuge from the constant sense of fear and coming out of the state of confusion of one’s own identity. In such circumstances the greatest degree of identification is found in those group identities in which the individual is most deeply rooted. These are primarily closely interrelated ethnic and religious identities. In that way *I* becomes *We* again, this time homogenously, since identity is established based on a small number of characteristics and features of the individuals who make it. If we turn back to bringing the most extreme possible points of view closer together, we can say that inter-religious dialogue helps us, believing in one’s own convictions, to start taking seriously other people’s convictions. These may be totally opposite from ours, and to understand them by *empathizing* with the situation of others. And vice versa, if we permit absolutization of a certain sur-individual (political) entity over individuals who are also believers, a dangerous maneuvering space can be created, with which instrumentalization of religiously indoctrinated people is conducted.

In the root of non-acceptance and disrespect of the *Others* there is often some prejudice contributing to certain characteristics calling up a sense of fear, disdain or repulsion towards individuals and entire social groups (members of other nations or

religious groups). These are actually not their essential characteristics, thus a tangle of disbeliefs is created and results in an unfinished job of facing facts. No one gives us the right to think that everyone must treat the issues of religion, politics, morality or everyday life in the same way. We must avoid any situation that would put us in the position of the absolute and supreme God arbitrator and form our attitudes and affiliations based on only one correct ethical request. That is why raising the level of consciousness on the importance of dialogue is a prerequisite of tolerance in the fields of religion and culture.

A society that respects differences between individuals and social groups is an open, pluralistic society. It is open because it is ready for new meetings and events, it does not avoid risks and dangers - on the contrary, it faces them. Building such societal dialogue between religious communities themselves is absolutely necessary, but also between religious communities and the state, bearing in mind the significance of religion in the creation of culture. In that sense religion cannot be used from the position of higher authority and talk to others calling upon the importance of tradition in its internal structures. It must cherish the dialogue of culture, and its augmented participation in political discourse. It is then necessary for religion to present its points of view on arranging and building a modern and democratic society. At the same time we need inter-religious dialogue on the common elements and differences with regard to certain churches and religious communities towards the state and society, as well as discussion on a common system of values, i.e. European system of values as the key integration factor. Here we have in mind the prospects, but also the role of churches and religious communities as institutions that support the processes of integration and reconciliation. However, we must not forget the fact that atheists have their own attitudes that could be relevant from a religious point of view (whether God exists at all, what is the role of death in life), so their answers to these questions are no less significant than religious learning is for a believer and represent an important link in the process of social dialogue.

The prerequisite of each dialogue should be true tolerance, as well as building cultural and religious pluralism. This means that “faith must not be rigid, but firm. Rigid faith makes man

fanatic, firm faith makes him tolerant. He who does not stand firmly in faith grabs rigid dogmas with both hands; and vice versa, he who stands firmly in faith has hands free to give them to those with whom he stands in existential communication" (Victor Frankl). Likewise, religions which tend to cover the wholeness of human living are tolerant to different principles of belief since they do not understand that there is only one, unambiguous path of salvation, i.e. "I do not prevent you from living as you wish" (Djuro Šušnjić).

The tsunami tragedy, which has contributed to establishing an open and positive dialogue between the Indonesian Muslims and members of other faiths, proves that common difficulties in life do not always have to be an indicator for intolerance and conflict. In Meulaboh, the town that sustained the hardest damage in the tsunami, in the beginning a Muslim movement opposed the assistance from non-Muslims, but the people rebelled so that help could be accepted from everyone. This leads us to a conclusion that dialogue between religious communities must not be left in the category of unrealized request for a political project, nor can it keep its elitist undertone in which only the supreme church elders and representatives of political elite take part; its purpose is to motivate the processes of reconciliation, cooperation, mutual respect and appreciation of citizens of all social strata. In the end, the issue is raised on how to find an adequate mechanism by means of which the consciousness on the significance of dialogue between religious communities could be raised. Society at this moment is in a state of political apathy. The attitude derived from that contributes to a social ambience that changes slowly, if not at all, while citizens feel powerless because they are without instruments of social power. The initial step is to take a positive life attitude, proactive towards everyday life problems and responsibility for one's own actions. Surely, little would be changed if these life attitudes remained in the domain of privacy and personal interests. But only when self-conscience is raised to a higher level, when our personal actions are governed by ethics of responsibility can we come to respect the *Others*. Just as *We* must make an effort to go a certain way in order to understand the life situation and ourselves, *They* must go the

same way. At the end of that path we shake hands, although it seemed impossible in the beginning, which makes *Us* people.

In that way political consciousness will be raised to a higher level where mutual understanding takes an important place in the hierarchy of the system of values (whether individuals or social groups), and inter-religious dialogue becomes one of the main prerequisites for reconciliation.

My name is Slobodan Vasić (1981). In November last year I graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy of Novi Sad, Sociology Department with GPA 9.08.

Since my graduation paper entitled *Youth Subcultures and Leisure Time of Young People* was of a theoretical-empirical character, which requested certain time necessary to process and interpret empirical data collected at the summer music festival EXIT (the empirical part of the paper is entitled *Study of the audience of the summer music festival EXIT*), as well as their placing in the theoretical frame of the entire work, the graduation paper was defended some ten days after the end of the competition term for the enrolment in the postgraduate studies. As the result of a series of "incorrect procedures" I did not manage to get enrolled in the first study year of postgraduate studies, although I would have been the first on the list and my studies would be financed from the budget. This means that currently I do not belong to the category of students (postgraduate students). Of course, I will continue my education in September or October this year.

I give this explanation because the front page of my essay does not contain the study year.

I hope my position will be equal with the positions of other participants of the competition because of the aforementioned circumstances.

Mirjana Bošković

God, Allah, Buddha ... different words for the same concept and meaning. We are born with the right to be different, and still we deny this right to each other. We deny human life in its essence, we tread on dignity and allow the human ties that bind us to break. What is it that makes men hate each other and lies inside humans as a sleeping volcano erupting in a moment? What are the factors that decide when the volcano will wake up again? The problem of today's society is that there is no mutual understanding anymore; people have forgotten how to listen to each other. If we are unable to understand difference, then the least we can do is respect it. The absence of respect leads to conflict among people. Still, this gap is not unbridgeable. It would be enough to build a bridge of words, stronger, longer-lasting and more resistant than of concrete and wires. All we need to do is talk! We must prove that people were not given that greatest gift from God by chance; we should prove we know how to use it.

For centuries religion has been the cause for rifts among people. It has been the reason for starting some of the greatest wars in history, such as the Crusades. In its name people killed, conquered, devastated... It was often a justification, an excuse for doing evil things, the curtain behind which many culprits were hiding. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, the situation has essentially not changed. The world has changed, the earth is changing constantly, and people change, but unfortunately, there are always those who are ready to abuse religion.

How many times did we hear that history is the teacher of life, and how much did we really learn from our past mistakes. The history of people on the hilly Balkans is so full of mistakes that we shouldn't be making them at all! We only need to take as an example the recently ended war in Bosnia and its horrible consequences. It should be a great warning and lesson to future generations that such events should never happen again. Prevention is better than the cure! In order to achieve that, we

need to change the consciousness of people. Like most things in life, people like to waste time, money ... even words. We tend to take words, but also give them easily. In that whirlpool of words, we often encounter the words of insult as the signs of disrespect, bad upbringing, political and other circumstances. We must be aware that what we say has its own weight and carries a certain responsibility along with it. Words can do a lot of injustice, just as they can do good. That is why they are a key in the solution to the problems created from increasing alienation between humans. In civilized society, we aim to become more, problems are solved in a unique and simple civilized manner, namely dialogue. This is the first and most important step, because with honest people, acts accompany words. Reestablishing true moral values would create suitable ground for the seed of development of society without discrimination of any form. Just as any other true path, this is not an easy path, but we should not give up quickly, and have patience. None of us are expected to, nor asked to become great reformers, to inspire thousands of people to think and act in a more tolerant way. It would suffice if we start with ourselves. To change or improve the views of the world, one can change oneself, and positive energy spreads out fast, like light. In that way, an explosion of democratic values would be transmitted simultaneously.

One of the problems is that religious hatred is passed on from parents to children. The consequences of such behavior of parents, mature adults, are great. In this way the circle of religious divisions spreads, first in time, related to generations, and then in the space dimension. Significant progress would be made if children would get used to being different as a natural human characteristic from their birth, if they would be taught to cherish their own identities, and to respect and understand the differences of others.

Politics and religion have always interwoven. They have made peace and confronted each other. Politics can often be the match that lights dry branches, or adds oil to fire. On the other hand, religion can frequently be blinding. People then act irrationally, reason is defeated and politics knows best how to use it.

“We most firmly believe
in what we know least“
Charles Montesquieu

In the wrong hands, religion is used as the instrument to control masses and causes great evil. In the Balkans it happened frequently, wars, treason, ethnic animosities... We should learn how to live with people of other confessions, with other views of the world, and not create conflicts of “into the sea” structure, with one primary aspiration, that differences disappear as if they can vanish deep into the sea. The only remedy is to try to forgive, to overcome the gap with dialogue, and in the future not to allow such things to happen again. This unites forces in prevention, with the aim of a better life of some future generations. Politics should be beneficial to its people, and not endanger the basic human right to be different, and it should inspire and give hope for a better future. It should set the example, so that all politicians’ declarations are like this one: “We must show respect to the ones who think differently from us, thereby demonstrating the power of our politics and European character of our politics.”

One example that the dialogue between different religious communities is possible is the meeting held in August 1997 in Sarajevo, attended by Mustafa Cerić, as the head of the Islamic community, Jakob Finci as the representative of the Jewish religion, Cardinal Vinko Puljić from the Catholic Church, Dušan Jovanović, the Parish Priest in Sarajevo and Nikolaj Mrdja as the head of Orthodox Church in Bosnia. Such efforts always leave positive impressions. “These meetings are the most positive events that took place since the end of the war,” the US Ambassador in Bosnia said.

Humankind in its social progress has lived through many things and has undergone different development phases. This phase Serbia finds itself in is a transitional one. The only thing we need to overcome it successfully is good will, individual and collective, political and human, patience and faith in a better future. It may not be easy, many pieces of a puzzle fit into a good image, but it is possible! Let us have strength, courage, will and certainty to take large steps into a more beautiful future without religious prejudice.

Tijana Bajović

Squabbles. Wars and anarchy. Differences, unbridgeable as they may seem to us. But only apparently.

The essence is quite the opposite. There is no problem that cannot be solved. We need changes. We need to erase the expressions *war* and *unbridgeable differences* and introduce new words and ideas. We should introduce *multiethnicity* – which respects differences and sees them as a prerequisite for cultural progress. *Multiethnicity* – which despises war, since it understands that war holds civilization back. *Multiethnicity* – which does not believe in anarchy, since it knows that the sense of order and responsibility is what makes us different from irrational beings. *Multiethnicity* – which finally accepts squabbles, but only if they are constructive and well-meaning, created by a mind that considers both what is positive and what is negative.

Economic and cultural progress is the aim of all people, regardless of their race and religion. Stable economic systems and a continuously developing culture that records its achievements with golden letters in the history of life, can be realized only in the society in which differences are transformed into advantages that open up new horizons and defend us from one-sidedness.

The citizens of the Balkan countries have the advantage of living in a strategically important area, being surrounded by great natural potentials and having the opportunity to make contact with representatives of different cultures. And they should take advantage of this opportunity.

Someone has to make the first step. Stop the disintegrations and support integration. Integration that includes establishing relations between humans, regardless of the religion they preach or the language they speak. Our feelings and goals are common. They are neither Muslim, nor Catholic, nor Orthodox, but simply human. Religious affiliation is mostly conditioned by

origin and tradition. We should be proud of our origin, but we must respect other people's origins as well. Civilization has been created by those nations that take only the best from diversity and develop it, and not only for the members of their own nation or religion, but for all people in the world.

How can we establish dialogue between those who are at bitter odds and prepare the grounds for trust and general progress?

Dialogue is made at an individual level, between people. It means that every one of us must treat other human beings with due respect. Failure to acknowledge other people's choice leads to generalizations. Generalizations are dangerous because they give us the wrong image. We need to understand that the image of a member of paramilitary forces, Serbian by nationality, ruthlessly killing civilians only because they believe in a different God, is not a mould each Serbian simply fits into. We also need to understand that not all Albanians took part in the attacks on Serbian people and they do not inevitably hate everything that is Serbian. The past must be accepted, we must face it and reconcile. Without it, there is no future. But past events must not represent an obstacle to reestablishing valid and stable relations. The past is acknowledged, but we must also distance ourselves from it, otherwise it will not let us go further. Why don't we let the future have a new scenario, nicer and more beneficial for all of us? The load of the past lies on our ancestors. They are responsible for what has happened in the past, good and bad. We will also be the ancestors to the generations that will grow up in the decades to come. That is why we carry the other part of the weight of the past and we are obliged to reexamine the actions of our grandfathers and fathers and not make the same mistakes again. Only in that way can we build a solid basis for future productive relations.

However, contemporary technologies and media largely influence the building of the image of other nations in our minds. The media must take an objective attitude towards the events, but also condemn any other immoral act, and praise everything that improves communication between those who are alike and especially those who are different. Failure to condemn the attitudes leading towards racial and religious hatred could stimulate

further exercise of such ideas. Failure to condemn negative social phenomena can make us begin to see these phenomena as something normal. On the other hand, each act that contributes to understanding among different people must be commended by the media. This is how a system of true values is built and established, the values that improve our lives. We should especially avoid generalized announcements of false and half-true information on other religions in the media, which can insult human dignity. In this way we create an impression that the members of different religions dislike each other, while the problem is actually in the very manner of presenting information and in the talk of hatred, which make people react in the same way. Let us make everyone feel welcome and desirable in every part of the world, be they Muslim, Christian, Buddhist or atheists! Smile, a nice word of support and cooperation. Most disputes come from the neglect and lack of wish to understand others. This must change.

Making the first step and offering the hand of reconciliation is hard. Only truly great people can do it. Politics and media should be open and kindly disposed towards their neighbors. Textbooks must be in accordance with the time and since the earliest childhood we should point out to the children the differences in opinions that need to be respected. We are allowed not to concur, but we are not allowed to condemn. Hatred leads towards hatred, and it takes so little for two human beings to understand each other. Including the materials related to all religious communities into the school curricula would be of great significance. Field trips and excursions can be organized with the aim of getting to know other cultures. Perhaps students could visit the area of Raška and the towns of Raška and Novi Pazar, instead of usual visits to typical Serbian villages, where they could see the course of cooperation between the people whose Gods have different names. Apart from Orthodox medieval monasteries they should also visit mosques. It is important to teach children that monuments of all cultures should be respected, and they will carry this in their minds all their lives and pass it on to their children. The members of national minorities must have the right to learn their native language in schools. The country we live in, although we do not belong to it by origin, will certainly be dearer to us if it does not limit us, but gives us motivation.

One of the positive reforms of education is introducing religious teaching as an elective subject. In the religious teaching classes we should conduct comparative study of great religious systems. Finally, the Gods of monotheistic religions do not differ much. Islam accepts some Biblical truths and prophets and claims that the difference is in their transmitting and understanding, and that only names are different. There are many names in this world, but it is not the name that separates us from others. On the contrary – it connects us and says – a name for the beings of the same kind. Differences in homogeneity. It is not hard to accept that. Find familiar letters in a foreign name and give your hand to your neighbor!

Milen Kakuća

Introduction

The greatest number of sociologists, regardless of the movement they belong to, whether they create and/or support social theories, agree on one thing – society is permanently exposed to changes. History proves that more conscious societies (i.e. their social elites) believe changes are necessary and that they do happen, that their results are positive. Also, they are better if streamlined in the desired direction, than if they happen by means of revolutions, suddenly and uncontrollably, and then as a result the more they will become advanced in terms of civilization.

Modern society means integration, connecting and cooperation between people who come from the environments that have influenced the formation of consciousness, opinions and ways of lives of these people, in various ways and degrees. The more similar social organizations are, as well as the achieved level of civilization's progress, the greater and less painful the possibility of connecting and integration is. Also, the problem of integration of a smaller number of "newcomers" into a certain society, was most frequently solved with their assimilation. However, the issue of integrations, due to social changes on the global level, is raised related to the integration of entire societies with the aim of creating a so-called "global village" representing one common society. The idea of globalization has divided the world into almost all crucial social segments. One of these segments is the religious communities that play an important (in some societies even crucial) role. Certain religious communities see the process of globalization as the way of destruction of their values and ways of life. That idea has still not prevailed in the most significant religions, but it is gaining importance increasingly.

In order to solve these problems and eliminate all dilemmas regarding the future of a certain society, civilization and nation, we need to start a permanent dialogue between reli-

gious communities, promote common values and, up to the level of social necessities and benefits, respect the attitudes they form together.

One specific example, which proves the importance of inter-religious dialogue, is the building of the new post-war society of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Namely, in the period from 1992 to 1995, civil war¹ was raging in Bosnia and Herzegovina between the members of three nations (Bosnians, Croats and Serbs), all three different by the religions they preach. Immediately upon the end of war, the *Inter-religious Council* was established, as a common, non-governmental body made of the representatives of four religious communities (Jewish, Catholic, Muslim and Orthodox). Although the work of the Council was not accompanied actively by support from the media, the results of its work, observed at this moment, almost 11 years after the end of the war, have greatly contributed to reconciliation among people. Some of these first steps that the representatives of communities took together were related to full and sincere mutual understanding, establishing constant cooperation between the communities through the Council, accepting the fact that communities are separate from the state and the rights of all people to practice their religion. The significance of this cooperation manifested itself mostly through constant activities within each of these communities. The representatives of religions called on their believers, both publicly and through their inner activities, to follow the examples of cooperation they instituted themselves. The cooperation between the communities was really making progress, and so frequently priests of Orthodox and Catholic churches held common services on the days of the most important Christian church holidays. Also, there is mutual financial aid in building and restoring the ruined religious facilities. In the past few years no serious, religiously motivated incidents have been registered.

Analyzing this example and the precious experience it offers, I feel that a similar approach should be applied in solving

1) A number of historians, politicians and chroniclers of the war of Bosnia and Herzegovina think that this war can and should be qualified as (or that it was mostly) a religious conflict.

other conflicts in which religious communities play important roles. Bearing in mind the fact that the main war hotbeds in the world are in Iraq and Afghanistan², and that the greatest number of people accused of terrorism claim that they find reasons for their actions in their religion comes from Islam, the significance and influence of religious communities in these societies cannot be underestimated nor can cooperation with religious leaders be avoided. Social roles of religious leaders are mostly prominent where there are no sufficiently developed public or state institutions. The prerequisite for the beginning of dialogue between religious communities is, as we could see from the example of Bosnia and Herzegovina, mutual respect and recognizing the right to express other views of the world. Another, and just as significant step, is to find out and express common values on which all religions are based. Having read the Bible, Koran and Talmud, I made sure that there are strong and significant common values which all three religions³ are based on. Expressing common values, means aspiration towards the development of peace and – as religious leaders often put it – “good will among people”. Furthermore, religious communities, where they are traditionally present as a majority, should do more in motivating their believers to accept and respect those who express their beliefs in a way different from the ones in which most people do, in other words, to respect them as equal citizens. The basis for this can be found in the foundations of almost all religions, especially the three mentioned here. It is especially important that the states, international and non-governmental organizations motivate their religious communities to initiate a constant dialogue, in order to help the solving of the current religious conflicts and to avoid starting new ones. Among other things, this means the development of the awareness of responsibility, as well as the significance and influence that the attitudes religious communities

2) In both countries the majority of population comes from the Muslim religion. In these countries religion plays an important role in almost all pores of social and political life.

3) Jews respect several religious books, the most important of which is surely the Bible; Christians, like Jews, based their beliefs on the Bible, divided into the Old and the New Testament which begins with the coming of Jesus Christ the Messiah (savior of humanity, according to the Christian belief), while Muslims believe in the learning of Koran which Allah (God) communicated to the last great prophet Mohamed Pregamber. The Koran represents the continuation, and as Muslims believe, the correction and amend¹⁰⁵

possess. The development of consciousness of responsibilities in religious communities gains importance also because they play a significant role in preventing and solving conflicts having a negative influence on the lives of a large number of people.

The basis for establishing and permanent development of the dialogue between religious communities does exist – it is contained in the religious teachings and foundations of the greatest number of religions. Those are standing for peace and equality among people, and motivating people to do good deeds.

Aleksandar Andrejić

Since ancient times, each society has developed its specific culture. Numerous factors influenced the development of each culture, from the time and epoch they appeared in, to the specific social phenomena in which they were developed. Certainly, one of the most significant social creations is religion, which plays a great role in building and forming the ethics of a community as the foundation on which the system of social values is based.

We know for a fact that people's religious ideas have great influence on the development of moral, social, cultural and other values that determine and give identity to people as individuals or to a group.

Although most religions represent a number of general principles close to people, such as love in the broadest sense of the word (love for family, friends, humans in general), morality, justice, equality, honesty, etc., in the times in which they were created and in the societies they adjusted to, they were interpreted differently. Each of the cultures created in Europe, in touch with another one, left behind a specific trait noticeable until today.

The modern European society we live in today represents a cultural mosaic unique in the world. The Balkan peninsula is also a mixture of various nations, their cultures and religions and it is a part of the European cultural space.

My aim in this paper is to present the ideas for establishing a multicultural society in Serbia through different forms of education:

- Mutual learning of religious aspects that caused cultural diversity in these areas;
- Getting to know cultural similarities and differences more closely, through a review of the European cultural space;

- Development of tolerance and mutual respect based on a modern and multicultural European society.

In a post-conflict society such as ours, where one of the most important causes of the conflict was religious hatred based on ignorance, it is essential that this be changed in the times to come. A new subject was introduced into the educational system in Serbia called "Religious teaching". If approached wisely, it can represent the best way for cooperation between religions.

The subject of religious teaching in Serbia is extremely badly organized though. Instead of teaching children who grew up in a conflicted society tolerance through learning different religions, they are divided into groups according to their religious affiliation and taught values of their religion only, which I think is entirely wrong.

I see that subject as the most important and most effective way to establish new social values. We should change the main principle of dividing children according to their confession and make one common subject, to be attended by all children. In designing the curricula, there is a possibility to include all religious communities, thereby making the subject ample and objective. Religious teachers from all religious communities would share and take an active part in the lectures, and their influence in children's workshops could be important. The topic of each workshop could be some basic moral principle (love, justice, honesty), which the children would cover together with their religious teachers from different religious angles. This would especially provide children with new views of different religious experiences of these principles and their use in the society. An important segment of the lectures could be connecting culture with religion, where religious teachers would read various texts on customs and beliefs to children.

I am convinced that there are many other ways to use this subject, with which the new generation of children, future members of society, would be educated in the new spirit of a modern society allowing them sufficient knowledge of respect and acceptance of mutual differences. A step in this direction would only contribute to the development of the culture of a society through its diversity.

In order to develop the idea of multicultural society in the adult population, I think special attention should be paid to getting to know the cultural and religious heritage of Europe through cultural activities. In that way we can find out how different religions and their cultures met on the European area and assimilated into a single cultural space, despite their differences.

Through general education subjects taught at the faculties, the review of philosophical ideas developed throughout the history of European civilization, and their relationship with religion, could be especially beneficial. Furthermore, through the study of art, we can peel back the influence religion played in its creation.

The presentation of documentaries about the intertwining religious influences in the area at faculties and youth cultural centers is a good way to reach the consciousness of a great number of young people seeking answers. One of the best ways to accept different cultures is through music at festivals, where people from various cultures would socialize together. We should encourage intercultural social interaction, whether through making contact at gallery exhibitions or by letting students travel to different countries in order to meet other cultures directly through their architecture, language, customs, and daily habits.

It is also important to continue educating people outside the school population, thus developing a tolerant society through the work of non-governmental organizations, social movement and civic initiatives. Expanding the consciousness of the people responsible for creating social relations would be contributed to by contacting them directly, through various seminars, round tables, public appearance and other activities promoting a multicultural society.

Finally, we should conclude with the statement that education has the most important influence in the process of reconciliation in post-conflict societies. This establishes the cause of the conflict and opens a path to a future modern multicultural society, where we learn to understand differences and respect them. I think that the key for establishing religious dialogue is in the society and individual, who can independently construct a balance between traditional religion and modern society.

Vladislav Radak

In the eighties and nineties of the last century the world went through radical changes that set aside past political opinions only to pave the way to a new order - democracy. At that time, the time of the fall of the Berlin wall, the breakdown of the Soviet Union and formation of other states, the European and world countries turned to the new inner organization, motivating the development of foreign politics at the same time, taking it to be an extremely important and irreplaceable factor of the modern world order.

The newly established force, the USA, received a true counterweight - the European Union. Motivating economical, political and industrial unity, the aim of the EU member countries was to compete in a global market where economy would develop rapidly and where the industry of minor and badly developed countries would slowly get in line with the better developed ones.

At that moment, when the world was facing the greatest historical turning point, the former Yugoslavia, instead of transition and turning to a new European future, chose inner conflicts on national and religious bases, only to find itself in the vicious circle of the greatest war storm these areas could have ever undergone. The reign of Slobodan Milošević brought devastation, poverty, and extreme nationalist and religious intolerance to every home.

Yugoslavia lost its credibility in the eyes of the leading forces, it lost its enviable status of the connection between the East and the West, its status of the traffic and trade center and gained the status of an isolated zone, the zero point.

Today the years of isolation have passed. Inevitable change of the political regime that followed on October 5 brought democracy an entire decade after it had been introduced to all other countries. Still, the horrible events such as the death of the

Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić and the riots in Kosovo that took place in March prove that Serbia still is not done with its past.

Can Serbia continue its painful way of transition without looking back? I claim it cannot. It cannot continue until it looks at the crimes committed. Serbia has no future unless true, democratic and sincere foreign political relations are established with neighboring countries. Serbia is located on a multinational and multiethnic territory that demands it create its politics according to new principles. It cannot go the right way if there is as much as a spark of nationalism, hatred and intolerance.

I would like to exhibit the theses I think are crucial in creating domestic and foreign politics, which are aimed at putting the dialogue between religious communities at the forefront, as a way of creating a new, reasonable and prosperous order.

Analysis of the religious conflict

For inter-religious dialogue to be possible at all, both parties would have to penetrate the problems much deeper and look for the very roots of religious disagreements. Evidently, some reasons which led to the conflict are clear from the very beginning. Religion is *not* the one factor that led to the beginning of conflict; it was only used as an excuse and motivation. The concept of religion was used by many, although they could not find themselves in it, in order to have an excuse for the senseless devastation.

The analysis of religious principles will help one religion understand the other. Global democracy must allow equality of each faith if it violates freedom and equality of others. We should clearly *understand* and *accept* the principles of other religions and *respect* them as such.

Multiethnicity and multiculturalness

The history of our territories clearly speaks for the aforesaid. Our country, just like all other countries in the region, is not uni-national. It is represented by many minorities and cultures. Each minority carries some typical characteristics within itself, including language, religion, and customs. In order to establish a true dialogue between two opposing sides, one of the

ways to do it is through culture, which is a universal, and yet typical language to each ethnic entity.

In order to establish clear contact of cultural exchange, we must establish different cultural events, which would have to be supported directly by the Government and the Ministry of Culture. This surely includes ethnic ensembles, traditional theaters, and establishing literary awards contributing to certain culture.

All the above should be enacted within the following crucial principle.

Decentralization

Decentralization is a clear, omnipresent democratic process. It is surely one of the main factors of inter-religious dialogue. Decentralization does not mean secession, or endangering central authority and minorities in this area, but quite the opposite; it is used as a counterbalance.

Essentially, decentralization represents dialogue. The representatives of the central authority and the other side must find a true way and solution that observes the freedoms of each minority, human dignity, equality and social justice. For the religious communities to live in harmony within one country, one side should accept and acknowledge other people's faith and convictions. Decentralizing processes must be gradual and controlled, so no one's rights would be endangered.

New approach to foreign politics

The way of formulating foreign politics is indelibly linked to state interests as well as with the picture with which the state represents itself. Economic collaboration and exchange can only contribute to improving intercultural and inter-religious relations. After a decade of isolation in the region and in the world, Serbia finally has all the qualities for better formulation of foreign politics. True foreign political relations with the countries in the region will contribute to better communication with the minorities in our country. Of course, in the case of open and well formulated foreign politics, we need not speak of economic prosperity.

Education

Analyzing the problems of one nation or region, few people think where exactly the root and the beginning of the problem can be found.

Education is an excellent way to prevent spreading intolerance. Teaching children and young people their own and other religions is the true beginning that will develop further into the dialogue of opposed parties. The beginning of dialogue should be created already at a young age, so these generations, who will be the leaders of the new society, will be free from any intolerance and ready for openness and cooperation with any religious community and ethnic entity.

Influence of the church itself

The influence of the church on inter-religious dialogue is surely one of the most important factors needed to improve the dialogue. Religious communities should have impact on its believers, with the aim of spreading tolerance. At the same time, if two churches begin the dialogue, it would be a good way to spread awareness against discrimination.

Conclusion

Spreading awareness of accepting other religious communities and faiths is a difficult and long-term process, especially in these areas. For the dialogue to be achieved, we need to act united and we need the will from all sides, including churches, governments and especially citizens themselves.

Dialogue is the only true tool for reconciliation and prosperity of both sides. My country is on the right path to establish true communication and I believe in it. I believe that we have first looked ourselves in the eyes and looked at our past, that we have learned from our mistakes and that we will not let them happen again. I believe that Belgrade will be marked on world maps as a transportation route free and safe for all nations and religions.

I do believe.

Milica Stanković

Introduction

Every day we face many problems, both on the level of our state and in the world. One of the greatest problems that must be solved as soon as possible is the problem of disagreement among people from different religious communities. In this case we will consider the problem of disagreement between Christians and Muslims. Due to the absence of any spiritual reform, people identify the struggle for their personal rights with the struggle for religious convictions. The greatest problem is that few believers respect God as supreme authority; instead, each individual imposes himself as the authority in society. Religion should be a connection that binds all people, and not an obstacle for realizing close contacts and cooperation. In the dialogue between two religions, injustice and oppression must be faced and finally rooted out.

Analysis

For the dialogue between religious communities and their representatives to take place, we must first analyze the problem of squabbles and disputes between them. The church and its elders play the key role in this dialogue.

As a religious institution, the church is increasingly becoming an instrument used by the individuals holding high positions to control and manipulate people. People kill each other for their religion and church, not thinking what the religion actually preaches. Nowadays, more and more frequently, churches have only one purpose of existence and that is to provide consolation and healing. Church elders must be included in the dialogues between religious communities and give their assistance in solving problems. Muslims are extremely united in preserving their faith and sacred things. Christians, on the other hand, have sided more with Europe and have a more open-minded compre-

hension of the world around us, which led to disagreement and split within the Christian church itself. Nevertheless, neither Muslim nor Christian religious learning deny the basic human right to religious freedom. Although these two religions are different in more ways than one, we can still find compromise acceptable to both parties. If each individual (whatever his religion and faith might be) manages to solve his personal problems, face reality and actual state in the world, we can talk about solving problems on the community level. In this dialogue, the representatives of both sides must make an effort not only to respect sacred things and churches, but also to observe human rights. All people have the right to existence, to their religious affiliation, to expressing their own opinions and attitudes. This is the advantage of living in a democratic society heading towards the use of dialogue to solve problems peacefully.

In March 2001, the Social Defense Community (Bund für Soziale Verteidigung) made a statement as to the current state in the Balkans: "We believe that the challenge of the peace movement has now been presented as politically active and militant pacifism. Politically, in the sense of development of the idea of versatile civil work as the reaction of social and international conflict which is naturally the common criticism of military based state politics. It is a struggle, in the sense that the one who wishes it must pave the way for peace." On the political stage of Serbia, all individuals have their own images and views of the world. They force their opinions and attitudes through the media and the educational system. In those views of the world they have, everything is politicized and divided – others can only be for or against their orientation. That is why they see a potential enemy in everyone, someone who could attack their convictions. We, as a democratic society, must face the newly created situation on the political stage and struggle against everything that could possibly slow down our journey towards Europe.

We must consider reality in a critical way in order to discard harmful influences of the past and redirect society towards progress. Normal, democratic life requires inter-human dialogue. Everyone is entitled to express their own opinion about state, social and religious problems. I quote J.S. Mill: "If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person

were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.“ Therefore, individual opinion cannot be superior to the opinion of the entire nation. Entire nations, and not only their representatives, should take part in the dialogue between religious communities. The greatest problem we have to solve in the process of solving social disputes is the problem of disrespect of other people’s opinions. “Objective truth“, which includes harmonization of different attitudes, must be fixed as a solution to this problem.

Although in the past there used to be a lot of injustice and discord, wars and squabbles, we must leave them all behind us, and, guided by democratic convictions, set off towards solving current issues, the most important of which is the issue of inter-religious dialogue.