

SELECTED ESSAYS (2)

by young authors



Helsinki Committee
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This is the second collection of selected essays by the authors who attended the courses and seminars the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia organized in 2005.

Within the three-year project "Building up Democracy and Good Governance in Multiethnic Communities" that is being implemented with the assistance of the European Union, twenty-four 5-day "Schools of democracy" and sixteen 3-day seminars under the common title "Life and Living in Multiethnic Environments" were held in 2004 and 2005 in Belgrade, Novi Sad, Kragujevac and Novi Pazar. Over 1000 trainees attended these courses and seminars.

The project is aimed at capacitating young people - by the means of attractive courses of training - not only for a life in multiethnic communities that are particularly burdened with the adverse experience of the recent past, mutual distrust and stereotypes, but also for a life in the conditions that mark a modern democracy and reflect its standards. An objective as such implies, among other things, rational perception of notions, developments and trends that are in Serbia still blurred, marginalized and subject to relativism or, moreover, to various and even misleading interpretations. The Helsinki Committee's experience testifies this is all about a process that takes time but is worthy of effort - the more so since young people, as evidenced by the selected writings as well, fully perceive it as an imperative need of their own.



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Stefan Nikolić

(Novi Sad)

A TEENAGER'S THOUGHTS ON PROBLEMS OF HIS GENERATION

My topic is indicated in the title, while in my head continue to swirl thoughts about the link between multiethnicity of Vojvodina and the rights of the child.

I am vexed by the hatred-charged graffiti which I can see on the walls of my city, and I am also vexed by my history teacher to whom I mustn't disclose the true causes of my late September absence from school.

And I was with You. You must be wondering now about my whereabouts in those days?

I attended the School of Democracy in 26-30 September period in the Novi Sad office of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights.

My attendance was seemingly accidental, while in fact, once the lectures were finished, I realized that my mother had secretly planned everything in advance, and in fact made me face a fait accompli situation. Now while writing down my thoughts I am very grateful to her.

Several days prior to the start of the aforementioned lectures, I fell off the bicycle in downtown Novi Sad and broke my arm. My arm was put in plaster. During my sick leave my mother showed me the text relating to the Helsinki Committee School of Democracy and tried to explain to me how useful it would be for me to attend it. Then I was not very interested in that school. Now I recall that I thought it might be quite dull, but my mother persuaded me to attend that school by the following words: "Stefan, last summer you were in Petnica. You

came back a new boy, full of enthusiasm and enchanted with the then lectures. School of Democracy is Petnica of social sciences and it could help you finally opt for the secondary school specialization."

Then people from your organization were very understanding of my age, they invited me, and their school was so interesting that I am now writing about my impressions and thoughts. Perhaps I am in fact writing about indeed impressive people whom I saw there, and whose lectures and words I, to some extent understood.

I am sure that you, while reading this text, are in fact thinking the following: What is this boy trying to write about, what is he in fact trying to tell us? What is that suggested link between multi-ethnic Vojvodina and his professor of history?

And believe me, there is a strong and visible link and I am very grateful to you for allowing me see and listen to the person who was one of the candidates for the Nobel Prize, then Biljana Kovačević's Vučo lecture which prompted me write this essay, Pavel too, whose discussion was as interesting as the one between my parents in our house, and finally, the imparting of the history-related overview by Sneža Kresoja.

Suddenly I no longer saw those *boring people from TV screens* whom my parents usually watch and whose statements they sometimes quote during discussions about the political situation in our country with their friends. Suddenly all those TV people had their names and surnames, their distinctive gestures, they were there, before my eyes- in flesh.

Once the lectures were over I really desired to share my impressions with my peers, with my school pals and teachers. But then the curtain fell, and my enthusiasm and joy were replaced with melancholy and sadness.

Since my sick leave was justified by a doctor's certificate, I was able to do whatever I fancied. And that is exactly what I did. But as soon as I was back in school, back in my 8th grade with stories about my interesting experience and impressions of TV people whom I have met personally, impressions of their words, no-one was willing to listen to me. I could not share my impressions with anyone.

History professor is obsessed with the Kosovo myth and Serbhood, my head teacher is a refugee from Croatia, and in her mind all non-Serbs are probably bad people. A psychologist and pedagogist would have told me that I should have prepared the admission exam for the secondary Zmaj Jova school, instead of attending the School of Democracy. My school-mates don't understand me, most of them have never heard of the Helsinki Committee, while some think it is a spying NGO.

I have just heard that the "Week of the Rights of the Child" is being marked by various celebrations in Serbia. I wonder if those rights exist at all?

In this primary school we are being told stories about the Children's parliament, about creation of a good mood in school, and contribution of children to improvement of quality of lectures and the learning process. Pupils and their parents are asked to come up suggestions in that regard. There is much emphasis on the partnership between pupils's house education and school education, they teach us to respect opinions of others and to honour diversity. While I with my experience of the wealth of diversity must keep mum, and when I dare mention it I am met with disapproval, stern glances and criticism of the people who people who had let me trust my School for Democracy lecturers.

And that is not the end of my troubles!

My both parents are jurists employed by the Novi Sad Ministry of the Interior. And we all know that the date of 5 October has long passed. Well, to make the long story short, my mother came from work several days ago and started telling us how her colleagues criticized her for letting her child attend the notorious Helsinki Committee School for Democracy. And that is exactly the link between insulting graffiti on the parliament and Executive Council of Vojvodina building and absence of human rights.

Ideas of my parents are not very popular in their work ambience, and I feel misunderstood and isolated in my school because of my parents and their decision to let me attend the democracy lectures of an organization which in Serbia does not enjoy much support.

And that too explains the link between the two, apparently remote topics: multiethnicity of Vojvodina and the rights of the child. Instead of all the people embracing the common idea of respect of different opinions, and letting it lead us to the unique vision of peace and welfare among people, we have opted for teetering on the brink of ruin in our isolation from the rest of the world, all the while being terribly proud of being Serbs! We are so obsessed with showing to the rest of the world our exclusivity!

Today we had a special class during which it was decided that the majority of pupils from my grade would set out on a several day long excursion. Our head teacher tacitly and in advance approved our future consumption of beer and wine, with the following words: "Children but all those bottles must be kept by me!"

My friend Jovana (last summer we attended the Summer Scientific School in Petnica) and I were excluded from the excursion. We are good youngsters and excellent pupils. But we don't fit in such a milieu. I have mixed feelings. I am both proud and sad. I am waiting for the November testing of pupils covered by the US-Serb education exchange program.

Olivera Radovanović

(Kragujevac)

FALL 200X

This morning Jana has received a letter from Svetozar. She has expected his reply for days, and impatiently waited for the arrival of the old postman Mita. So she was overjoyed when she finally had Svetozar's letter in her hands.

She closed the window to isolate herself from the city noise and nervously opened up the envelope. And finally, clearly written and neatly written letters were before her eyes.

"Hi, girl!

Sorry for having waited for my letter, but I must tell you that life in Banja Luka, as of late, is so interesting, that I simply did not have enough time to dedicate myself to writing a letter to you.

While I am writing to you, the wind is blowing and swirling dry leaves on the streets. ... Colors are simple wonderful outdoors! The sound of human voiced attracts me and I can hardly wait to say good-bye to you and go out, dear friend!

People are so lively here! One day I was sitting and sipping coffee and watching smiling people pass by me! All of them were kissing, and hugging each other. ... They all wore beautiful jackets and suits. ... They nibble sweets and spend hours having fun in the park! I regressed and became a child again simply by watching them!

I admit that I am growing impatient, and therefore another line or two to you would be superficial and awkward. Therefore I want to say good-bye to you, in hope that we shall drink coffee again and that there will be no need to keep writing letters which are too small moulds to convey the words of my love for you, my dear friend.

Lot of kisses, from your Sveta from Banja Luka"

Jana pressed the letter to her bosom and sighed deeply. She was happy for Sveta was finally happy! As always she immediately took her pen and paper and started writing.

"My dear friend!

Though I am sad because we are so far apart, I am very happy, even without seeing you, because you are finally content. But I would envy your happiness and be jealous of if I did not have as good time here in Belgrade. Here everything smells of ...autumn, mixed wits smells of freshly baked croissants from the nearby bakery, which has just reopened. Do you remember Sveto, do you remember when you moved into my building block and all children teased you...and I defended you and treated you with the best cheese pie in the world. ?! Hey!

And then you promised that when you grow up you should write me a song ...just for me. Do you remember that... you crazy boy??!

And you are right...this fall is beautiful! And I don't want to miss out on its beauty. ..

I send you too a lot of kisses, and please start writing regularly, as you promised, for, on the contrary, I shall also grow lazy, just to spite you !!!

Bye friend !

Regards from Belgrade!"

Completely satisfied and happy, Jana took her jacket and eagerly ran out to crowded streets of Belgrade.

Nenad Jelenković
(Novi Sad)

HAVEN'T YOU GROWN TIRED OF YOUR OWN HATRED

Do you read dailies?
Come on, don't give up... Those dailies contain only random writings of some. ... While we have our own thoughts in our heads, don't we?

Do you sometimes re-appraise your own stands?

Do you ever ask yourself: "Do I hate anyone?"

As of late sports news have been moved from the last, to the front- or first pages, usually reserved for the political news. We can for example read how football fans from Zagreb beat up fans from Belgrade, which is more than sufficient to resuscitate the vampire of hatred (and our seems not to have got a wink of sleep for a very long time.) And then obviously the first and foremost thought of people here is that Serbs are hated and Croatia, and then the fans can hardly wait for the new match in Belgrade, to get across the same message of hatred...

But if one judges matters only by fans, then it seems that Serbs hate Serbs, and Croats hate Croats?

If I ask someone why he hates Croats, he immediately starts talking about their hatred of. Thus the principal argument of hatred among us is the infamous: "Well they hate us too, don't they" ...

And thus the circle is closed.

If some fools there have similar hatred-charged graffiti, that is, we face the same stupidity written by identical fools. So tell me know: if the stupidity they commit there is wrong, how come that ours is –right? Can

Serbia turn a blind eye to some killers and maniacs just because they are Serbs? !?!

And of course bad news resonates more and farther than the good ones. I would like to put on the other side of scales my impressions from Croatia...and then someone in Croatia should put my impressions on the other side of their scales. It would be OK for the start-up of campaign of mutual good news...

This year I was lucky to have several concerts in Croatia... Before my departure many in Serbia tried to dissuade me from going there, because my safety would not be guaranteed...in view of recent problems at a handball match in Zagreb.

We had three concerts, two in Zagreb, and one in Rijeka. I have been a musician for years now, but those three concerts were just fantastic, I had the most fantastic time. Girls gave me a big, furry ass with the message:

"Give our regards to Novi Sad. Denizens of Zagreb love you."

The bass-guitar player later told me:

"I can't believe it...See, how bad politics and politicians are. They destroyed everything that was destroyable."

And they started destroying all that was not destroyable...

And they were successful in their intent...

They sowed hatred on every healthy soil, and rare were those who remained immune to their spread of disease...

OK, I am fighting in my own way against that and I feel fine while doing correct things for my milieu and myself.

I know that I have not succeeded in changing many things. But it is difficult to defeat the strongest weapon in the world-the stupidity...

Not because it is stronger than common sense and intelligence, but because it is more –widespread...

Excessively so...

My dear people, if you hate anyone, if you hear yourself utter the words of hatred, then be aware that that you fell victim to the disease curable and treatable only if you realize that you can change if you re-appraise your stances, if you let yourself admit to yourself: "What those around me think and what I have thought is no longer of importance... I have pondered and now I realize that this reasoning of mine more healthier and cleverer and that is why I am a better man." It is so simple. Everyone says that: "Man is a man, character and profession of his parents don't have any impact on him or her".

So what's the problem, why can't we translate that into practice?

Well, we are in fact that problem...

Try to understand and correct yourself... don't be lazy. And if you are so lazy, then don't bother to hate Many in this region grew bored with -hatred.

P.S.

I hope that these lines shall reach Zagreb:

We send our regards to Zagreb.

We love you, denizens of Novi Sad and Pazova ...

Nataša Kiković

(Beograd)

WEDDING, WEDDING, WEDDING

“Wedding, like any other wedding, what is there more to say, a parade of drunkenness and kitch...”

This story is inspired by a genuine event, and if some scene and characters seem familiar to you, you are right, for, unfortunately we are surrounded by such characters, and some of them are lurking in our midst.

In early July I was a guest at a wedding in a small town in the vicinity of Nis. As soon as we entered the bridegroom's house we were offered candy fruit, water and meat of a roast pig suckling, as befits the customs of our people. While some were sitting at the table, eating and drinking, the host and hostess, accompanied by sounds of wedding music played by accordionists, warmly welcomed the guests hidden behind large gifts-packages they were bringing together with brandy bottles and inevitable roast pig sucklings on skewers. Those gifts were taken over by people specifically charged with that task. Gift-packages were labelled. Names of gift-givers were written on them, to avoid that the gift received on the previous occasion be smaller or less expensive than the one given for that wedding. The host then welcomed the guest with the speech and gulped down a drink as “cheers” for their good health, as appropriately recorded by a watchful eye of a cameraman. An excited and nervous aunt then asked all the guests to close ranks and peer together into the camera lense. Then the hostess apportioned various tasks

to some guests. I was honoured by the task to attach a sprig of rosemary and of other flowers on guests lapels. While adorning all the guests, I felt very important, for all of them were staring at me. But I suddenly realized that they were watching a basket in my hand, which was slowly, but steadily filled up by banknotes given for each sprig or flower, as the custom implied. Then we all walked out and in front of the house danced a wedding dance. The time was up to go and pick up a bride.

Upon arriving in the bride's house, we were all welcomed warmly as the custom implied. A steadfast hand of the bridegroom shot down precisely the apple hanging on the pole at the gate. In a clear show of enthusiasm over that heroic feat, every single male guest started firing from his gun or rifle. For me it was a throwback to some scenes in westerns in which there was usually much shooting for no apparent reason at all. Before we started bargaining for the value of the bride with her brothers, her aunt ran up to us with an adorned rooster which even had shoe-laces around his neck. We were custom-bound to buy the rooster. And we paid dearly for the rooster, as the custom implied.

Bargaining process for the bride's hand was a protracted affair. Her brothers were sure of her worth, while the bridegroom's brothers knew that she was "a damaged commodity." The haggling was interrupted by the bride's uncle. He said point blank that it was mindless to discuss her worth and innocence, for she was six months pregnant. Finally we managed to "buy" the bride. Then she left her room in company of her sisters. She was beautiful, nicely made-up, dressed in a white long wedding gown, trailing along the floor just like those donned by heroines of our beloved Latin American TV serials. I was glad that the bride was so much in tune with modern times. In a show of love, and for the sake of future good relations, as the custom implied, the mother-in-law made the bride sit in her lap, swang her for a while and then made her eat some sugar and honey from her hand. When the bride left the house, a veritable battle erupted. Both her and our relatives started randomly shooting in order to show the superiority of their calibers and beauty of carved wooden butts of their rifles. Then we all merrily started dancing another wedding dance. And afterwards we all left for the Municipal Hall.

In front of the Municipal Hall I resumed my task. But then it also dawned on me that that task was much more complicated than I thought. Namely I had to match the colours of wedding flowers to the last-century two-piece suits of middle-aged matrons, unaware of the fact that their permed hairstyles had long gone out of fashion (for they go to hairdressers once a year, only on important occasions) and middle-aged small-town gentleman who failed to realize that dark blue, black and brown colour

cannot be matched, and that white socks and black shoes have gone out of fashion after the dismantling of the Italian mafia in the United States. Poor sods, they in fact just emulated the suits worn by a popular folk singer in his highly-rated TV show aired by the most famous colour TV station in this country. I would have survived all that lack of taste, had I not been approached by too many young brides-to-be with requests with "adorn" properly their elusive beaux, by letting my sprig-pins pierce not only the lapels of their elusive and oft cheating beaux. Females, guest-workers from abroad, and city ladies caused quite a stir in that crowd, with their modern hair-styles, fake brands of top clothes items, artificial nails, and well-matched shoes. To put it honestly, the young looked quite fashionable with their well-matched clothes and shoes, though some of the brands were fakes. Many were genuine look-alikes or copies of some popular singers and actresses, though they managed to successfully emulate fashion styles of politicians and top athletes. But, what overwhelmed me most was the verbal instruction to take a mental note of each donation, that is, to possibly write down or memorize both the single amounts and their donors. The idea was to settle the accounts in a benevolent way. That is to ultimately see who was more generous, theirs or ours relatives and friends. In the Municipal Hall some scenes were very interesting. A semi-literate female register was struggling with words having more than 6 letters, and in that place was so evidently run-down and seedy, I somehow managed to avoid quite a large piece of plaster which fell from the ceiling. After the fateful YES, the promise of eternal love, and a long-awaited kiss, we left for the restaurant, to continue with eating and drinking, as the custom implied. But, first there was a lot of kissing in front of the municipal building and a lot of picture-takings with the newly-weds, and the obligatory scene of prospective brides catching a single bouquet of flowers thrown by the bride. Catching of that bouquet was a memorable, action scene. They trampled upon each other, pushed each other violently, only to see the bouquet ultimately caught by a pair of male hands!

On our way to the restaurant we witnessed a scene similar to the one which characterized our journey to the bride's house: a motorcade with every single driver hooting wildly, and some even waving flags. In the restaurant each guest had his own allocated place, in line with the familial ties, bloodline and friendship hierarchy. By and large, one big family. Wedding like any other wedding, barring some great hits of original folk music, believe it or not, we also heard some Bajaga hits. A song after a song, and then again the wedding dance. Musicians indeed played a killer dance, for it lasted, in a frenetic rhythm, more than twenty minutes. Both the young and the old managed to survive it after much hopping around,

swaying, breast-jumping from deep décolletés, profuse sweating. Deeply impressed by that dance I remembered an unusual song once heard during a similar revelry: "A male wedding, it should make all of us happy". After the wedding dance, gung-ho musicians played a genuine southern belly-dance to the delight of most males, for it brought about memories of the days of their youth when they haunted the cafés and restaurants in an incessant blur of carousing. Thus, with beaming face they all fell on their knees before their spouses. "Misconduct" of heavily inebriated guests carried away by the jaunty music was monitored by the village gossip-mongers, for it would be a sin for the village to remain in the dark about the quality and quantity of food, the looks of those present, the dancing partners, the flirting partners, and judging by their glances, prospective -foes. Aside from the watchful eyes of the most notorious gossip-mongers, the event was monitored by inevitable picture-taking. But photos turned out to be more expensive than anyone expected, for many claimed to have taken active part in the continuous photo-sessions! On the other hand my task has been long completed. Now at play was a very an odd task performed by so-called "money-keeper". Namely one of the rare abstemious boys was tasked with monitoring guests' "donations" to musicians, or rather with keeping the wallets of any male guests from overt hemorrhaging. That boy was also tasked with preventing several people from paying to musicians to play several times the same song. Thus we ultimately faced a paradox, for first the best-man, then the bride, then the others paid to the musicians to play the same song! In the middle of revelry the host held once again his welcome speech and then the "cheers" drinks rounds started anew. I am in fact talking about that strange custom of our ours when both the bride and the bridegroom greet every single guest, kiss him or her and have a drink with them, while guests give them banknotes-laden envelopes which are placed in a separate basket. After many "cheers" and several rounds of folk music hits, the wedding cake was put on the table. It was a three-tiered affair, adorned with enormous multi-coloured flowers and with figures of the bride and bridegroom on its top. The first slice of cake was given to the bridegroom by the bride, and then, to my surprise, a waiter brought several glasses and a champagne bottle to the newly-weds. What followed were exclusive cheers between them and their best-man and maid of honour.

The peak of the wedding celebration transpired just after midnight. Drunk and semi-drunk guests kept swilling large brandy glasses and anew fired off their guns and carbines, for what is a revelry without shooting! When the wedding celebration finally ended, though it could have lasted longer since half of the police-station was present, the bride took off her shoes, and started dancing on the table. Her husband's semi-drunk brother

somehow lifted her and put her on on the table; but he nearly failed in his endeavour. Then her brother, carried away by a folk song from his native town, hit his head with a full bottle and managed to break it up. Glass shards suddenly flew around, his head started bleeding and various coins and banknotes started leaving the guests' pockets. All the guests embraced, formed a big circle and started singing. Both those who had long left for a big city and those who had long emigrated to make a decent living were now in that circle. It bears noting that many of them have not been on speaking terms for years, because of human stupidity, envy arising from someone having a better car or a house, or simply because of an unsettled inheritance.

My grandmother Tana would say: "A drunken bride likes her husband's brothers." Memories of homeland cropped up, tears welled up many eyes, and there were embraces on all sides. It seemed that we were all engulfed in love. The dead were mentioned too, God save their souls, as if they were there with us. Musicians were playing by the table, very close to our ears, while some guests were already sleeping under the tables. Guests kept ordering songs from the times when my grandmother was a young girl. The songs depicting wonderful landscapes of our rural areas, our love pastorales, the one related to our shepherds and mill-keepers. Hey, those were the times! All my good-will to be part of that unusual crowd, disappeared after the great hit of a popular female singer with an odd surname was sung: "I'll give, I'll give, because I have to, but I still want to torture you a little". Then one of hosts held a speech: "D-e-a-r gu-ests, thank-you-uuu for coming, eat-eat, and dri-nk, and have a good time, and we shall se-e each other again so-on, on a sim-ilar occ-asion". Unfortunately all the beautiful things are short-lived, and accordingly these modern weddings last only one day, so ours had to end too. Hosts by hugging and thank-you words bid their farewell to all the guests, who, in turn, profusely thanked them for their hospitality and promised an imminent and similar reverly, or get-together. I felt only sorry for all those women who upon returning to their homes were scolded or maybe even beaten by their husbands for having earlier counted the number of their drinks.

To the surprise of many, there were no trumpet players at that wedding, and the age-old custom of circulating loaves of bread (baked by families of the bride, the bridegroom and the best-man) from table to table in order for all the guests to place banknotes on them was omitted. The latter gave rise to much gossip and speculations in the village in the post-wedding days.

Unfortunately as long as in Serbia glasses and bottles continue to be so eagerly embraced, the spitting on the floors remains the fact of the day, the mouth-wiping by sleeves continues to be a time-honoured practice, as

much as the throwing of cigarettes butts on all surfaces and in all places (the ash-trays are yet to be introduced in this country), and as long as women and children continue to be maltreated or beaten up, and animals tortured....our accession to Europe does not seem very plausible. ... Those luckier than us and more educated and with a higher regard for cultural norms, have acceded to Europe and or are getting ready for the EU membership. But as the things stand now, and in view of the fact that our mind-set has not changed an iota in the past two or three centuries, we are facing another Serbian golgota or a thorny road upon which we have to embark in order to make it finally to the civilized world. The only good aspect of the aforementioned conduct, is that we could proclaim the cheese pie, barbecued meat, brandy, Guca trumpet festival and authentic weddings our genuine brands, without even slightly worrying that anyone would even try to steal our copyright.

Milica Stevanović

(Kragujevac)

LIGHT TO LIFE...

Every new day welcomes us with its light. People get feelings, which cannot be scrutinized or explained by useless and suspicious words.

We live totally devoted to the time around us; we love by devoting ourselves to the loved one. We are stringing together a necklace each pearl of which is one, sacrosanct part of our life. We rarely dare utter anything for the words always mean the opposite of what we want.

Tomorrow someone may discover a new speech, and someone may not even try to do it. For our own good we must clothe it in thoughts. For it is the language of meaning.

There is always something resembling a quiet farewell. Intertwining games make me notice that. So do fables which we to date have beautifully spun. But fables start increasingly losing trust in us. Our needs are increasingly unmet, and we increasingly grow lonelier, disappointed, hurt and broken.

Nothing can be added to the present. Therefore we only have the future, that is why we now dream of it and write about it. Let us fight for each other and write down the future as early as today. Let us fight side by side; let us be connected by mutual understanding, love, trust, sincerity and warmth. ... For the sake of our better tomorrow!

Countless places are waiting for us, and we can arrive anywhere. In our hand bound by love every touch shall be tamed and soft. And if by sheer lack of attention we try to kill something, we shall fail, for every thing we touch shall be turned into a living being.

We “run” and meet our other self, we are getting lost in our deep inner selves like drops of light! We search for our own identity, inspiration, authenticity. Rare are those who understand the boundary of freedom, and even more rare those who understand the freedom of that boundary.

Eskimos say: “Don’t build a door bigger than the house”. That would be like building windows smaller than eyes. If sometimes during the struggle for our rights we slip or trip, let us not treat it as the fall into a chasm, but rather as an ascent to higher realms.

The fact is that people bow to persuasion. That persuasion is oft wrong. Therefore let us not allow the truth to fall asleep. Let us not close the door before the voices of our wishes. Let us express in red and green colour “terrible” human passions ...

Let us not be swayed by someone whose face is not bathed in light. Let us believe in realization of our goals and let us bear in mind the possibility that every gesture of ours may be just an illusion. Just like the world, which shows us different faces depending on the angle from which our eyes view it.

To the one whom I hopefully watch in the mirror, I am the hope, which he views from his own world. I don’t believe in anything, which is perceivable only from the one side of sight.

Andraš Juhas

(Novi Sad)

WHERE IS OUR COUNTRY HEADED

„90’s are gone forever. We are 10 years older, poorer, and truly. That is the price of our stupidity and of our irresponsibility.”

In the 90’s I was six years old. I did not know what the society was, what a political party was, what a President was. I was unaware of existence of those things, and of the fact that some people, other than my parents, influenced my life. But I knew that the following year I would start going to school.

In the 90’s I found it odd that some relatives of ours and also our neighbours were leaving our country for good. I did not understand the reasons of their leaving; I lived without a care in the world. That fall I started school and my parents were increasingly talking about a war. I remembered war from films and its indication for me were also the persons who had left the country the previous years. Suddenly I sensed the reason of their leaving...

It is said that my generation too early started „dealing with politics”. But none of us, children, was in fact involved in politics, we just talked about it. I don’t know if it was good or bad, but nonetheless it was the reality. I recall that in the early 90’s, perhaps in 1993, my parents, with some posters in their hands, took to the streets every night. I wanted to go with them, but they refused to take me. Later they told me that they affixed those posters with photographs of university professors Ivan Đurić and Tibor Varadi, the persons, who according to them, would one day dislodge Milosevic. And then, I realized for the first time the meaning of the word „politics”. I understood it as the struggle of some people against evil. Of course, then I also had that

sudden urge to become a *Politician*. To fight for the good things, to put the state in order. Children's naivete is just wonderful.

I grew up in the pessimistic mood of an uphill struggle of my parents and their like-minded peers. Thank God I could not understand their pessimism. But when I enrolled at the secondary school I was finally able to take part in „the struggle for better things“. My ideal was the movement „Resistance“. So I started distributing leaflets and affixing posters without a clear idea of the political situation in my country, without the political knowledge, and even without the need to acquire it. And the foregoing was due to my unwitting decision to be guided by emotions. I believed that the revolution was useful, I believed that *Changes* would be effected if a very large number of us shouted and whistled on the streets.

And we „won“ on 5 October. Now I feel somewhat ashamed of that futile period of my life. I was naive and lazy. As a child I did not believe in existence of Father Christmas so, as a secondary-school pupil, how could I possibly believe in revolution?

„To put it frankly an average citizen does not have the whole picture: namely he or she does not know where is our country headed, what is happening to us? Somehow everything seems like a cracked mirror?“

It took us a decade to close our ranks and to massively move against Slobodan Milosevic and his stooges. Thus the physical preconditions for the *Changes* were finally met. But what lacked were the intellectual ones. I agree with the opinion that masses of people were compelled by the survival instinct to vote against the Milosevic regime. They voted for they felt that if nothing changed their lives would be imperiled. I stress: they were motivated by instincts and feelings. Many failed to pose the following question: why should we replace Slobodan Milošević? What shall we achieve with the regime change? What can we expect from the future authorities? What lacked was the awareness of the true character of situation in Serbia in the year 2000, what lacked was the awareness of implications of the upcoming transition, what lacked was the need to think. But despite the lack of intellectual pondering of the *Changes*, we say that on 5 October in Serbia *Democracy* emerged as a winner. And citizens guided only by instincts expected Messianic abilities from that *Democracy*.

„And our adoption of democracy, our direction towards economic reforms, our option for Europe are not in fact guaranteed. We just have a chance to do that, but that chance could be quickly gambled away.“

To put it bluntly, I „started thinking“ when I became a student. Three years after the *Changes* I was compelled to admit to myself that the „promised polity“ was not pursued and that my dreams of a sound and fertile democratic society would not be translated into practice by anyone.

For the democracy to truly exist, we must be cured of „we-need-a-leader complex“. I am electing my representative in the Serb parliament. He works for me, and not vice versa. Citizens let their representatives run the state. Since they are paid for that job, they are responsible for good and smooth running of the state affairs before those very citizens. As you see that is a very simple principle. Unfortunately our „democratic authorities“ have not yet manifested their readiness to educate public opinion, to turn it into a truly democratic one. It is a paradox, isn't it? Every new historical period in Serbia is riddled with the long-standing, or rather age-old problem: uneducated, gullible, uncritical and even-in-poverty-conformistic citizens (as manifested in their continual lamenting and passivity). That problem is above all resolved by –education. Perhaps I am wrong, but that is a firm stance of mine.

„To change Serbia, each of us must change a bit...“ ... „I ask you, all of you, individually, to say when you wake up: I am glad, another day is before me! I have a chance to do something today.“ ... „You must motivate yourself, you must motivate your team-mates.“

It is oft said that the mind-set is the main culprit. Serbia needs a leader, team work is not applicable in Serbia. We should slow down our journey to Europe, because we are the Balkans people, different from Westerners, etc. I don't quite understand the impact of mind-set on the reform process. If we are aware that our so-called mind-set is our main obstacle, then why aren't serious attempts and efforts made to change it? We have some social problems which date back to the Middle Ages. One of our major problems are too obedient citizens, citizens who bow too much to the authorities.

Citizens make up a state. If an average citizen becomes more educated, more self-conscious, more diligent, the foundations of the state are strengthened. It acquires new, major qualities. Reforms in Serbia shall not be implemented by force. If there is no need for new standards, for learning and work, if there is no readiness to accept new standards, then...I don't know what should be done in such a situation.

Instead of the state-run TV media stranglehold, now we have tabloidization of public opinion. „Kurir“ is the most widely read daily, in schools we are still taught myths, rather than historic facts, the old project of perpetuation of quasi-history is still in place.

In Israel, due to across-the-board-poverty, the state church took over an important role in education of children. The said institution offers gratis schooling, bed and board; the price thereof is total obedience of citizens. They bow to the church authorities who play a major political role. I don't know who has voted for the Serb Orthodox Church, but it is clearly more active than most political parties. Isn't that situation slightly reminiscent of the one in Israel?

„You are a young man, so I tell you to turn towards the future. Look towards the future, for there you and I shall meet, since I intend to live in the future.“

You know, autumn is a strange season. Every autumn the nature primes itself for a long sleep. I love autumn. It makes me think, it makes me healthily and moderately optimistic. For me the autumn is the season of renewal, of necessary alteration of elements which make up a whole...

In history all the major revolutions happened in the autumn. So did our revolution. Society is exhausted from such events, so perhaps it needs a reinvigorating sleep. Perhaps such things happen in the autumn, so that we could sleep them over during the winter. But in Serbia that winter has lasted far too long.

(All quotations are words of Zoran Đinđić
from Aleksandar Mandić's film "If Serbia grinds to a standstill")

Irena Đorđević
(Kragujevac)

DEMOCRACY

When writing his "State", Plato had in mind a collective conscience in a termite-like community. We must agree that every community is confusing.

On the other hand if we analyze the gist of the notion of democracy, starting with interpretation of the very meaning of that word, we should not allow the most free interpretation, that is, the one that implies the rule of people. Opposite of democracy is birth of anarchy, which inevitably leads to social turmoil and chaos. Democracy should be understood as a verse in which each of us may find oneself. If we stick to basic norms of conduct and culture, we acquire composure, which usually brings us peace and happiness. Some would perhaps say that the respect of norms and some principles is tantamount to limitation of liberty, that respect of others is tantamount to humiliation of oneself. But such a line of thinking is oblivious of a flexible stance towards all the things and beings that surround us.

Acceptance of the will of citizens is democracy. Of course that will is the most adequate and valid parameter for prosperity of the majority on global plane. Respect of the popular will implies the respect of people, state and future.

Rights and liberties, as well as obligations of citizens are regulated and guaranteed by the Constitution. But a clear boundary should be drawn

between rights and liberties, on the one hand, and obligations on the second hand, in order to avoid negative effects of the will.

Rights and liberties are also stipulated by other acts, notably, the Act on Health Protection and Protection at Work, the Act on Protection of Environment, the Act on Public Order and Peace, etc.

I would not like to insist on the youthful interpretation of “democracy” in terms of the rights and liberties we exercise at home or in school, for I think that the others are duty-bound to take care of us, by backing what the citizens want and by translating into reality plans for the better future.

As we have all learnt in our schools theoreticians’ only espouse their theoretical pondering of democracy, while a person in order to see these thoughts transferred into the practice must understand all the limits and boundaries, which he or she has been imposed.

Splendor of democracy is best reflected in its implementation. To enforce a written law is a much more difficult task than to bear the burden of thinking about freedom. Of course in distant past we talked about physical freedom, today we talk about freedom to think and express oneself without sanctioning of any step or letter of ours. In fact democracy is the basis for setting up a ideal community in every day life. And that is so because I have the right to freely think and freely expose my thoughts to my parents. I often have discussions with them, I usually ask them about their opinions, but they also feel the need to ask me about my opinions. Sometimes our opinions differ, but we must tolerate such occasions. Every single person has his or her rights, but survival of democratic relations hinges also on tolerance. And school is one large, democratic community. Sometimes pupils misuse their rights, and because of their immoral conduct conflicts emerge and the authority of the elderly and professors is substantively challenged. I allow my professors to encourage a free flow of my thoughts, their birth, development and realization. Then I feel independent and creative. Then I am full of initiative. I am pleased with myself and my parents and my school are pleased with me.

We all know Aristotle’s thoughts on democracy, but I was never asked what I thought about that notion. Thus I have the right to write democracy in this way.

Mara Živkov
(Beograd)

FOR THE LITERATE ONLY

There are two inextricably linked problems to which, in my mind, proper attention has not been paid: one problem concerns the control over the media and accessibility of (un)true information, while the other concerns population to which the said information is conveyed. I shall furthermore try to quote several examples from history indicating how the elite-controlled media concocted so many lies and prejudices to make the vastly illiterate population committ terrible crimes.

In this post-modern wave which has engulfed us, information is the principal tool in the battles which we wage in markets and in public life. But what happens when the available data are wrong? Who are those who decide on the extent of our knowledge and what is the reach of their influence? Are we in fact aware of the magnitude of media-controllers and the ways they used their power in the past?

A belated research study laid bare a terrible truth, which even the greatest pessimists did not expect: nearly half of Serbia’s population is functionally illiterate, that is has serious problems with literacy (cannot sign any document, cannot read any written text let alone understand it...). Why are these findings so alarming? Because it is easy to manipulate such a population, feed it with half-baked information or even the doctored or fake one. Then one must pose the following question: is this large group of functionally illiterate people able to think critically and what are the consequences of that ability or inability of theirs on this society. Unfortunately, despite communication achievements of the 21st century

– great accessibility of all kinds of the print and electronic media and the Internet, present-day citizens of Serbia seem to be same citizens who in the early 90's of the 20th century went to war without asking too many questions. Namely, stances of the less educated and less literate people are more easily shaped in turbulent times, during social upheavals. Power-holders can easily play with their age-old fear of internal foes and threatening neighbours, doctor “the historic truths”, revive existing stereotypes about minority groups, and, finally, issue the basic guidelines for actions targeting a clearly defined enemy. Such a process of shaping public opinion is not simple at all. It exacts a good ideological blueprint which can be later used for explicating any new situation. Xenophobia and general paranoia which dominated the public discourse in the 90's in Serbia represented only the basic material, which was later easy to apply during, for example, the 1999 bombing campaign. In the same way Hitler adjusted the blueprint of Jews, as principal foes of dying German economy in the 30's of the 20th century, to the new circumstances of the WW2 by alleging that Jews in conjunction with the Soviet Bolsheviks were trying to destroy the German people. I am intentionally drawing a parallel between the two cases for in both of them the war-mongering blueprint played a major role. The gist of wars was spurring on of national intolerance, that is, of ethnic prejudices by politicians for the sake of realization of their selfish goals. In both cases, those politicians used as their main tool all the media. And the group most susceptible to the war propaganda and war goals were and are uneducated people, because of their propensity to react only emotionally. And the then power-holders played successfully with emotions of that large group.

In the early 30's of the 20th century when Hitler came to power in Germany, he totally controlled information released to the general public. In such circumstances of an active anti-Semitic campaign, the terrible impact of the media on population fully emerged. In his book “Ordinary People” Christopher Browning explained the crimes committed during the WW2 by ordinary Germans. He also stressed that many of them were induced to commit such atrocities by substantive information manipulation conducted by Hitler and his party. He went as far as to maintain that the war compounded with omni-present Nazi ideology sufficed to convince ordinary Germans of justifiability of killing innocent Jewish women and children!

The same system of stereotype misuse was put in place by Slobodan Milosevic in late 90's of 20th century. Milosevic, furthermore, used the media to effect ideological indoctrination of population at large.

But what is the character of the current media situation in Serbia?

Is it right to assume that in the media realm in Serbia there was a certain turnaround after the so-called 5 October revolution? Are the media more professional today than in the pre-5 October period or they are still represented by the same Milosevic-influenced journalists from the times of TV Bastille who now have only a different master? What has clearly remained unchanged is the ability of the media to create a social climate usually befitting very exclusive interests of power centers.

Social climate is an intangible category or notion, but it plays a major role in shaping stances of people. Those stances consequently either activate them or lull them into conviction that their non-action, from the moral standpoint, is good or justifiable. However, the above mentioned social mood may become quite a tangible category once one resorts to a critical analysis of the media contents, once one tots up all the public calls to lynch, or their even more obvious consequences. In a certain social mood people grow relaxed, they become conformists and most certainly think that they are acting in the right way in view of identical stands manifested by the leading media. And if such calls to lynch and violence are approved and even instigated, then a catharsis once the deed is done is –glaring. The two most conspicuous examples of the aforementioned are Slavko Ćuruvija and Zoran Đinđić, whose deaths were very much publicly instigated and announced.

Demonstrations in Belgrade, Niš and Novi Sad during the March 2004 riots in Kosovo amply indicated the existence of a grouping ready to quickly respond to the situation depicted in the press or by TV by very strong language and in very strong colours. In other words to an emotionally highly charged event. We were also witnesses of the existence of social groups ready to rally in no time in order to torch the oldest Islamic institution in Belgrade-the Belgrade mosque and also the Niš mosque thanks to the tacit, official greenlighting of violent responses and outbursts. Added do that some electronic media openly incited such citizens' response to the Kosovo riots as as a form of “support” to Kosovo-Serbs.

Torching of the mosque exemplified inability of our society to respond with a cool head or rationally to violence, showed “justifiability” of religious minorities-targeting counter-violence and indicated both the power of the media and population's susceptibility to that power. It is scary even to think that this society would not be able to perceive some future (or currently burning) problems and potential conflicts, and consequently respond to them in a calm, critical and rational way, as befits a civil society. The afore-mentioned response can be expected only from a society which is on a higher level of social awareness. And that level is yet to be reached by

this society. In my mind, the most responsible for the foregoing is the local intellectual elite, which stances should exert most influence on the general public, and whose members should criticize calls to lynch and violence, while strongly promoting moral values on which any democratic society must be founded.

Tamara Stojković

(Novi Sad)

DIFFERENCES AND VALUES AS A CHALLENGE

First they took away the Jews. But I did not protest for I was not a Jew.

Then they took away the communists. And not being a Communist, I did not protest.

Then they took away the trade-union activists. And I did not protest for I was not a trade-union activist.

Then they took away me. But there was no-one to protest against that.

Pastor Niemöller
Victim of Nazis

“World-wide the innocent become victims just because the colour of their skin is different from the one characterizing those who punish and convict them, just because they struggle for different values, just because they espouse different religious and political ideas, just because they belong to other cultures, or simply lead a different life from the one led by the majority of citizens in their accidental milieu.”

Can you imagine how our life would be more beautiful and fuller if the basis for the understanding of the different, were more solid tolerance and co-operation?

Unfortunately in recent years in our streets and on facades of our buildings we could notice fascist, chauvinistic and nationalistic graffiti. Representatives of local authorities were not quick to perceive the meaning of those messages while a large number of citizens were simply not interested in them. And those street messages are only the top of the iceberg.

What exemplified Vojvodina for centuries and strengthened its specific character were its linguistic and cultural differences. The latter always presented a challenge for its citizens in their effort to maintain and develop Vojvodina as a specific and unique region. Due to conflicts, crisis and wars in which this region was engulfed, all that was called the traditional cultural wealth was damaged. We now even face an alarming situation in which both the majority and minority are very poorly informed about the others, their problems, necessities and demands. To make things worse due to the across-the-board disintegration and isolation the wish to know more about "the other" is well nigh nonexistent.

Tolerance is equal to endurance. It is not a "lesser faire" attitude, but rather endurance of something which bothers us, which we don't like, which we disapprove of. The entire human life requires tolerance among people. At the level of community and culture we should cherish and encourage respect for the others. Tolerance is the issue of the basics of common survival, and the former can succeed, only if it is mutual. It seems to me that of primary importance is the issue of tolerance, notably in multicultural and multinational societies, which are not homogeneous in national, religious or cultural terms. Tolerance, however, has its limits which we should not trespass. No-one has the right to proclaim that "different is bad", for when we lose the right to be different we lose the right to be free.

Struggle for implementation of human rights is a long-term job, and to carry it out successfully, we need persistence, decisiveness and knowledge. Two things are making that struggle more difficult. On the other side there are citizens who are not persistent enough, who become disheartened after the first failures, and gave up on the combat for implementation of human rights. The second reason is a decade-long, citizens' fear of authorities. In our country people respect if not outright revere the authority of power-holders and official/elected authorities. That is OK, but it should not be done at any cost. In fact, it should not be done when the authorities abuse their power. In order to genuinely and seriously kick-start the struggle for realization of human rights we must be rid of the fear of authorities. Authorities must be respected, but we must realize that they exist because of us, that they live at our expense, that we pay them, that they must serve us, and not vice versa. If we embrace that line of thinking we shall be more successful in the first stage of both individual and collective struggle for human rights. Collective

actions are based on civic solidarity without which civic, democratic state is not feasible. If someone's rights are endangered don't tell yourself that it is not your concern, notably because one day you may find yourself in exactly the same situation.

In one verse of his song "Piece of Life" Gabriel Garcia Marquez thus speaks: "I have learnt that every man has the right to look down on other people when he should help them get up on their feet." That is the gist of the story about multiculturalism, about how in order to achieve a healthy life one should only feel and act like a man, about how the open-minded attitude and curiosity, and ability to question many things and accept them, to give and to love, are the values which from the first people, from the time immemorial, through the entire stormy currents of history of civilization, have not changed, for there were no objective and acceptable reasons for their disappearance.

Tijana Vladislavljević

(Novi Pazar)

FUTURE, HUMAN LIBERTIES AND RIGHTS

It is very challenging to speak about future, because it is a subject-matter, which exacts a serious and in-depth approach and visionary ability. That presupposes a lengthier paper than the nature and purpose of this essay allow. Thus one should take into consideration only the key processes and changes in the mid-century with their brief description.

There is a methodological difficulty, which can easily mislead us and make us commit serious errors, for there are no exact and proven indicators of the future changes. To avoid being prophets in such a serious matter, it is necessary to use the current experiences, that is deduction and intuition when drawing conclusions.

If relations on the local and global level continue to develop like in recent history, that is, in order to prevent radical changes of that course, or, in other words, slowed down development, involution, or even an unexpected acceleration, we can say with great certainty that the world in the mid-21st century shall have the shape described in further text.

Friedrich Engels said: "Duration of historical age with respect to duration of pre-historic age is similar to the relation between one minute versus the whole human life." As it is well-known in pre-historic age progress in development of society was reflected by invention of work tools, and hunting lifestyle and economy. In that very long period people used tools made of bones and stones, engaged in hunting and they lived in groups in

caves. However in the historic period accelerated discovery cum development of new tools and emergence of new lifestyles and relations provided for a succession of monumental changes. Namely, big changes once occurring every age or era, now happen every decade. Hence it can be expected that work tools would be so perfected that the human, physical labor would be reduced to the minimum, or rather thanks to automation and robotization unfold exclusively on the intellectual level. Scientific and technological inventions shall cease to be the privilege of single states, and swiftly become general good of the whole world. That particularly applies to the widespread use of new planes, computers, cell phones. Promotion of science and technology and massive use of their products shall bring about educational reforms, expert specializations, swift changes in professions according to personal inclinations, and access to much broader education. Illiteracy shall be totally eradicated in the whole world, and new forms of literacy shall be introduced allowing people to quickly communicate at long distances. By extension a new universal language shall emerge, while local languages shall be used only in local communities. The harbinger of such a development is the current, global use of Internet. By extension such a universal communication shall accelerate circulation of commodities, ideas, and people.

Prejudices about other peoples, races and faiths like any intolerance of human differences shall be relegated to the historical garbage. Unification of diverse national cultures shall be done in conjunction with desirable preservation of positive traditional values.

As a logical consequence of the predicted progress, conditions of life and lifestyles shall be radically improved in underdeveloped parts of the world and shall result in a general well-being. It is hoped that all the known diseases in mid-21st century shall become curable or even eradicated. Human age shall be significantly prolonged, thus approaching its biological new limit.

Civilization shall move towards creation of smaller cities to which the rural population shall flock. In parallel the growth of megalopolis shall be slowed down. Living conditions between cities and villages shall be equalized. All along human rights and liberties shall be promoted, and discrimination shall be curbed and morally rejected. Relations between people in normal, daily life, shall be humanized, and people shall become taller, more beautiful and shall dress better.

Psychological and moral changes in people shall be such that they shall start thinking quickly, become more deft, more compassionate and emphatic, and stop perceiving other people as foes or rivals.

Democracy as a notion and practice shall not be linked to single democratic states, but shall rather become an achievement of all peoples and states. On global level democratic institutions shall function, the world

government shall be engendered by the United Nations and many non-government organizations like the Red Cross shall be operational too.

It is thought that by the mid-21st century new energy sources, notably the wind, solar and nuclear energy shall be tapped into. Space research shall become commonplace in the world, and space travel shall have positive effects for the mankind. Opportunities shall be created to employ a large number of talented and genial individuals in all scientific and artistic fields for the sake of the common progress.

Large-scale peaceful coexistence and pacification shall bring about the end of conflicts and conflicts of civilizations or reduce them to a sporadic occurrence. The present-day local and world wars (so far there were thousands of them) have so much absorbed natural and human resources and caused backsliding in the general progress, that the powers to be shall decide to put a stop to that social phenomenon.

History so far was awash with examples indicating how every single positive achievement in human society was misused and manipulated to lead to paradoxes. That opinion was voiced by Albert Einstein: "After the nuclear war people shall wage wars with cavemen weapons". A good example is contamination of the human environment due to hyper-production. Emission of carbon-dioxide from phosphate fuels gave rise to contamination 100 times greater than the permitted one. All those emissions created the perilous greenhouse effect, which increasingly warms up the atmosphere, causes disastrous climatic changes, and damages the ozone layer. In consequence of all those processes in mid-21st century many animal and plant species shall become extinct, the new, lethal diseases shall affect the entire mankind, and mutations among many species shall increase. Nuclear radiation and consequently the danger of accidents like the Chernobyl one with disastrous, long-term consequences shall also increase.

Furthermore one of the consequences of that accelerated, high development of society shall be overcrowding of our planet and higher population density in many areas, as well as depletion of natural resources (reserves of oil, clean water, coal, wood, desertification ...). Acceleration of history, abrupt changes in life and work conditions may jeopardize physical, psychological and social integrity of humans. .

Human stay in isolated housing agglomerations and means of transport shall result in atrophy of vital organs. Humans shall not be also able to adjust psychologically to accelerated and complicated processes in contemporary plants, akin to enormous prisons.

Despite everything the aforementioned processes shall be stopped, purity of nature shall be preserved, and material preconditions significantly promoted. Technical-technological development as well as cultural-civilized

maturing of people and their communities shall contribute to flourishing of civil liberties and human rights, while inequality between races, nations and faiths, and sexes shall remain only as an ugly memory of the archaic period of social development.

When all the aforementioned is summarized and connected to the upcoming fantastic achievements of the mid-21st century in conjunction with foreseeable and unforeseeable trends, which some futurologists see as the sources of possible apocalypse, my optimistic conviction is that positive trends shall continue to grow, and that the human ration shall timely perceive and prevail over apocalyptic predictions.

Ivan Kuzminović

(Beograd)

MUCH-NEEDED FOES

We all have our “natural” foes. My foe is an old woman who throws her garbage bag every day directly from her eighth-floor flat onto the street. Hitler’s foes were Jews, Vietnamese were foes of Americans, and Russian foes were Americans. Michelangelo’s foe was Rafaello, David’s was Goliath, and the foe of baby Maggy’s from “The Simpsons” was the other baby with thick eyebrows.

In other words, people need enemies. It is necessary to channel the fury and discontent with one’s own life. In the process, the true basis of that hatred is not important. That hatred may be quite irrational (which is most often the case) or be based on competition aimed at conquering some resources, in which process, I suppose, that hatred acquires some rational elements.

So who is the object of the Serb hatred? In fact, the list of those objects is long, so we shall try to summarize it. Interestingly enough, in the last 150 years the object of their hatred changed. First, the Serbs hated Turks. Objects of hatred were not obviously only the people, but also individuals. Thus Vuk Branković was the most hated personality of the Serb history, though that hatred was totally unrelated to the critical history. Then the Serbs hated Bulgarians and Macedonians. Throughout the 19th century the Serb intellectuals, the organicistic theory-minded ones numbered all the reasons which should make us hate Bulgarians, Jews, Macedonians, and even GREEKS!

In the 20th century our enemies became other personalities and other peoples. In early years of that century the high-ranking place on the list of

traitors was occupied by Draga Mašin, together with Austrians and Germans. In the late 20th century the objects of the Serb hatred were: Albanians, then Slovenians (for an indeed short period of time), Croats and Bosniaks, then Albanians anew, and Americans (as representatives of the whole Western hemisphere) too. In early 21st century another domestic traitor was found. He was killed in front of his office on 12th March 2003. He was labelled a criminal for trying to switch on the light in Serbia.

After the regime change in January 2004, the whole NGO sector, to put it precisely 3 or 4 organizations and to put it most precisely – 4 women became the object of hatred. Their names are well known. They represented the latest prototype of enemy. “They are dangerous”, “they are powerful”, “they are trying to destroy us”.

NGOs have been active in Serbia for at least 10-15 years. Therefore they are not a new social phenomenon. Even during the Milosevic era their work was not a novelty for the authorities and citizens alike. During Milosevic regime the NGO sector was a hindrance for the authorities, but a hindrance which was not considered too perilous. Only in the year 2000 the authorities took repressive steps against NGOs. The brunt of the official clampdown bore OTPOR (Resistance) which was labelled a NATO branch office, the fifth column and its young members were tailed, arrested, and harassed by the repressive state apparatus.

Only after the 5th of October 2000 NGOs were vested in a new, quite imaginary authority and role. According to the authorities, NGOs became a strong centre of power in a small country, and its representatives were tasked with depicting Serbia as a very bad place by using, according to politicians, very illegitimate means, doctored facts and figures, false witnesses, and doctored history. Accordingly it was implied that their motive was pure greed for the good old greenbucks or European Euros.

Both the regime and opposition alike via media succeeded in convincing citizens of Serbia that representatives of NGO sector are a very dangerous phenomenon. So recently, Head of the Security-Information Agency (SIA) Rade Bulatović informed us that the security situation in Serbia was good because his services were tapping and surveilling NGO sector!? Several days ago I asked my colleague in Zagreb if he could imagine a situation in which the Croat Information Agency would publicly disclose that it was tapping or tailing, for example, Žarko Puhovski? And my colleague burst into laughter.

So politicians in conjunction with Milosevic’s secret services and media have been informing us for weeks via press features about misdeeds of those secret organizations. Their sources of financing, their goals and motives.

Sociologically speaking, these organizations are consciously ascribed *social power*, which they either don't have or have very little, depending on the definition of power which we consider the most valid.

What is a social power?

Here's a classic definition by the top sociologist Max Weber: power is gauged by prospects of a single man or a certain number of men to implement their will within the framework of a joint action, even despite the resistance of others who take part in that action.

Here's another, more modern interpretation of the notion of power by Michael Mann: to put it succinctly he thinks that power is the ability to attain goals by prevailing over the environment. He notes two forms of power:

a) distributive power – as an ability of individual to make others help him in realization of his goals;

b) collective power – as an ability of social groups to demonstrate their power over other groups.

Now let us apply those basic definitions on concrete cases. Therefore the power of, for example, Biljana Kovačević Vučo would be that she alone (or with organization she is heading - YUCOM) makes the other individual or other group of individuals to do something against their will. Even more concretely let us imagine Vučo trying to MAKE Kostunica lay off, for example, Velja Ilić from the post of the Capital Investments Minister. Such a move would be prompted by assessment of the Jurists' Committee that actions of that minister are dangerous for Serbia. Thus to make her intention come true she must have certain power. Now we shall again resort to Mann's theory, but this time around from the angle of source of power. In other words that power must be based on any of the following sources of power: economic power (to bribe Koštunica), ideological (the power of ideas and convictions reflected in persuading Prime Minister of Serbia by dint of arguments): that Ilić is a bad minister, that he kicks journalists, that he cusses, that he buys M.A. diplomas, political power (to use the state apparatus in order to compel Kostunica to make that move) and finally, the coercion power (to that end to use physical power on Democratic Party of Serbia and Kostunica).

I would say that it was not likely that she had access to any of the aforementioned sources of power. She could not bribe the Prime Minister of Serbia (it is a well-known truth that he is an honest man), also it is not very likely that she could have convinced him of the foregoing; furthermore she does not have access to the state apparatus, and in her case the tools of physical forces are beyond her reach, or superfluous (I rather doubt that Ms. Vučo is an expert in Kohler and Koh sniper-guns).

The intention of this short essay is to prove the falseness of claims that those organizations are indeed so powerful. However they possess

power in another form, namely in the form of a publicly spoken word. Unfortunately it turned out that even such sort of influence was not allowed. In other words, it is quite legitimate that the assassin of Prime Minister of the country publishes a book from his prison cell, that war criminals write poems for children, and that for the committed war crimes each war criminal gets 500,000 Euro of compensation. However, to say that something is wrong with our recent past or with our society, or that Serbia is in a deep crisis, well that is immediately considered - a crime.

And how do the authorities deal with the unlike-minded?

They use two methods. The first one aims at proving that those movements are not legitimate. That method of proving their illegitimacy is per se legitimate. That part of combat is fair. But, when the state and its apparatus start proving illegitimacy of a movement, that is quite another story, because in that effort they maintain that those organizations are acting against the country's security, or engaging in organized undermining of the constitutional order, or even lobbying against the country. That process of proving illegitimacy of those movements consists of filing criminal charges against them, and notably of their public demonization, including publication of various files and records kept by different secret services.

To put it briefly, if the two parties are in a dispute and therefore stage a public, arguments- or semi-arguments -founded showdown, that is OK, but if someone's home address is published in a news article, that is quite another matter. That is a call to lynch.

* * *

And finally a word or two about the NGO sector, "as the new social project".

It is absurd to consider the work of NGOs one of the biggest problems of modern Serbia. For some modern sociologists the very existence of those organizations is a sign of a political turnaround in contemporary societies. Thus Simon Hallsworth in his book "Understanding New Social Projects", considers the feminist, environmental protection and anti-nuclear movements, and also the civil rights movements, as modern social projects.

As regards the movements focusing on the civic society and civil rights, he is of opinion that the basic goal of those movements is the following: struggle for improvement of rights of the socially marginalized groups, notably, women, ethnic minorities and homosexuals.

Namely, he thinks that those organizations represent a move forward in the society with respect to political parties, and that they introduce a new quality in the daily life of modern societies.

To put it briefly, the state as an institution repeatedly manifested its inability (or disinterest) to deal with those groups in the society which require most attention: disabled, sexual minorities, ethnic minorities, and human rights in general. And that is exactly the realm which the NGO sector covers. The sooner the authorities grasp that truth, the better for them and for all the citizens they represent.

Ivan Kovačević

(Kragujevac)

GENERATION LOST IN FOG

WHY?

It would be quite logical that we, as members of younger generation, be turned towards our future, towards what is likely to improve our communication with the world, with the lifestyle which, in view of our age, belongs to us. Unfortunately our growing up process, our childhood, our youth, were marked by bombs, war, devastation, suffering, and consequences thereof, which prevented us from growing up in a normal social milieu and mood.

WHY?

While attending this seminar I read that the winner of the competition for the best essay would be awarded with the trip to Dubrovnik. That brought forth my early childhood memories and photos of my stay with my parents at the seaside, in Dubrovnik. Video camera then recorded my first, unsure steps on the cobblestone of Stradun, flocks of doves which I fed, and my swimming failures in a choppy sea. I then did not know that the sea was Croat or Serb, that Dubrovnik was the Croat or Serb port! Then I could not know it, and even today I am not interested in such information. But what I managed to learn in the meantime was the fact that until very recently I could not travel to Dubrovnik. And that nagged me!

WHY?

Why am I and my generation “punished” for something we did not take part in? Why we are no longer able to travel the world, to know the world, to familiarize with our peers living in other countries? Today I already

know a lot about what has happened in the country once called Yugoslavia. I was born in that country! I acquired knowledge about the country which no longer exists, and deep-buried memories have started resurfacing. Sarajevo with its bands "Bijelo dugme" and "Zabranjeno pušenje", Zagreb and its "Srebrna krila" and Boris Novković, Split and its singer Dino Dvornik, Skoplje and its superb musician Vlatko Stefanovski and his rock band "Leb i sol"... Even today I am listening to them, and place them where they belong, to the category of musicians. Only by a sheer twist of fate they are Croats, Bosniaks, Serbs, Macedonians, but I am not interested in that part of their biography. I am interested in the identity of those who want to compel us to think about those musicians origins, faiths, and nationality while we are listening to them? For me it is inconceivable to listen to good music and think about origins and whereabouts of the band members or singers!

WHY?

In Kragujevac the generation to which I belong goes out around midnight. The same phenomenon occurs in Belgrade and other cities in Serbia and elsewhere. Some go to cafes and discos, some take to the streets with a syringe or ecstasy pills in their pockets, some are engaging in beer or vodka-swilling sessions. Until the wee morning hours we loiter the city streets, looking for fun. We are in a perpetual vicious circle, escaping from what the Day brings us: parents who for decades now are struggling to survive, to ensure us the minimal existence, always worried and disgruntled parents; equally disgruntled professors in schools who try to provide us with the minimum of knowledge and not only to mete out to us good or bad marks; the media bombarding us with always the same topics, empty debates or show-biz kitch; the press awash with sensational stories about security leaks, scandals, and crimes, with headlines which are sometimes even worse than the crimes themselves! Our response to all that was to escape into the cover of Dark, into the night, in which all these things exist, but are not seen. And then on top of everything they level accusations at us that we are a generation which only takes drugs, listens to *trancemusic* and does not want to learn or work! My generation is neither better or worse than the one of my peers in Germany, Italy or France, but we grew up in a milieu which we have not created. For which we are not guilty.

Courts of law, the time and history should have the final and just say, but can we wait until that final judgment is passed?

WHY ?

I watched a football match of the Italian Premier League. Both a Serb and a Croat played in the same team. They were so good that their scoring decided the match in favor of their team. Then a Croat and a Serb hugged each other, while in the territory of the former Yugoslavia, sporadic shooting was

still heard. Both footballers played for the Italian team, but also for themselves the rules of the game are clear-only the best remain! In this country those who have remained are either those too young or too old. That is why no-one goes to football matches, for only the worst players have remained. Fervent and violent football fans are now having a ball, for they can indulge in heavy fighting even during the matches. And that is what gangs of "Delije", "Varvari", "Grobari", "Đavoli", "Bad blue boys" do. The best have left!

WHY?

Why I am writing all this?

I am writing all this because I want a new photo of mine on Stradun.

My steps are now firmer and I know what I want.

I learnt to swim well, and now I can cope with big waves running against me.

I want to live my life to the full both in daytime and night-time.

I want to know what is happening everywhere in the world, I want to know even if I cannot travel, but let my choice be respected. I want to listen to the music of my choice, and not only the one which has a "patriotic" value.

I want to have friends everywhere, to work and co-operate with everyone, as if I were a member of the team belonging to the Italian or any other First League.

I was first born as a human being, and only later my name was entered into the citizens' registry.

Basically, I have been registered in the book of the citizens of the world.

That is why I want that photo from Stradun!

Dragana Ćorić
(Novi Sad)

BRUSSELS, 25 JUNE 2005

My dear girl,

I know that you are rightly mad with me for not having written to you for such a long time. I know that an ordinary apology, like the one that I was very busy, shall not be sufficient. I know that your beautiful eyes were teary and watchful many mornings. And the fact that I have caused you pain first by my departure, and later, by my long absence, shall trouble me for the rest of my life.

I admit that I was selfish. It did not even occur to me to imagine how difficult my absence, the absence of a friend, of collaborator, would be for you. I know that you hoped very much I would be back in a jiffy. But the international situation was not favourable. You must believe me that I would have come earlier, if the conditions had been ripe.

You well know how difficult my departure was. First the trust the other people gave me was shaken up. No-one believed me any more. Even when I vowed to do something, that had their suspicions, they denied me, they tried to undermine me in million ways. While I maintained the validity of my words, they kept saying that there were people with more money or other kinds of influence who could buy me, or buy someone better and stronger than me.

Then they tried to kill me. By bombs, by bullets. And then I was left alone. That is nearly alone, for you were always by my side. They took my other friends by dint of some scandals, false or true (I still don't know), blackmail, and money.

I really had to leave.

Others, and not only you, must desire my return. My arrival must be desired by all those who so whole-heartedly drove me out of their homes and thoughts. And their children must covet my return, for my arrival, like the Messiah's, may finally bring peace to this long-suffering nation. I am the only, at least I think so, who can remove any irregularity, pre-empt any crisis and street demonstrations.

I am not indulging in self-aggrandizement, my dear girl, but I am aware of my importance since the day of my birth. And my importance rests on the fact that I must protect people from themselves, ensure human liberties and rights, actively take part in their protection. I am important because I must indicate the right way of the state governance and of management of economy, people and politics. I am to indicate that those who groundlessly attack other people or appropriate property of other people must be punished. I am to lay down that every river, every leaf, and every child must be loved. I am to spell out that men must be respected and loved because of themselves and not because of their party membership. My task is to be always on the side of justice, be it on the side of the ruling nomenclature or on the side of opposition.

You see, dear girl, I am still an idealist, the same one which had to leave you at the mercy of conquerors. I just hope that you have not changed much, that your soul is still pure, despite the wounds which the war, poverty, incapable and greedy people have inflicted on you. I hope that your hair is still long as Sava and Danube, that you still smell of the freshly mown Fruska Mountain grass, and that your skin is as white as the peaks of Kopaonik.

I expect that I shall be granted visa soon and then return to you. To you, my dear, and to all others who have banished me, and who now, out of their very faddish reasons, want me back.

Always yours,
Constitution

Miloš Stoiljković

(Beograd)

MUCH EXPECTED FROM THE YOUNG ONES

What is wrong with the young in Serbia? Or let us put that question in another way: why the young in Serbia lack courage, will-power, desire to engage in resolution of social issues and why do they succumb to apathy which is increasingly becoming a main feature of the Serb society?

That issue shall not be raised only by an embittered member of the older generation who is also likely to say that in his youth things were different, that is, much better. It is only normal that the old level heavy criticism at the young, and that such criticism, pending on the currently political circumstances, is more or less politically charged. Aside from objections that the young are inclined to take various drugs and other inebriating substances, there are also those, age-old ones about the lack of interest of the younger generation in their fate, in the future, in the world. Young are young, old are old, young shall grow older, and we wish the old people to age well and to enjoy their deserved old age. I don't have enough experience or a sufficiently representative specimen to judge the older generation, but I think that I have some knowledge of the young, being one of them, and that I could impart it without aspirations to drawing lofty conclusions and lessons.

Among the socially active young similar remark may be often heard. Indeed a person who wants to change something in Serbia, may feel lonely and isolated. How many times have you come up against the wall of indifference,

or met with a scornful glance, and arrogant words: they are all the same?! Such a blow would not be so painful if it were not been dealt by those who were your co-combatants, sometimes even ahead of you. Everything would be less painful if you did not witness the rise and in parallel the proliferation of various, inter-connected right-wing youth organizations, much readier to face various challenges than you were, organizations whose activities are not banned, though they more frequently use sheer force than arguments. But what hurts me mostly is the awareness that that we missed out on the chance to prevent that phenomenon. But that is water under the bridge, thus a matter more easily agreed upon (or perhaps not?), despite the futility of such agreement. But what about the future?

Let us not fool ourselves: we live in the high-technology era, in the world of big business. Money is the prime mover and your life's successes shall be most frequently gauged by the quantity of the money you have earned. Probably today invocation of any ideal or a rallying cry to embrace them or higher goals is more useless and mindless than ever. Is there another place in the world which better than Serbia shows that being deft and vile are better attributes for achieving a good social standing and success than being clever and educated? Probably such a place exists, but then, Serbia definitely occupies the second-ranking place in the total list of such places. I agree with all those who say that here rogues are most successful, and that the hard-working people are easily destroyed or harmed by those inferior to them. If in Serbia successful are those who are rich, and rich those who knew how to plunder and steal, to bow and pander to the higher-ups, to be immoral and dishonest, then one must oneself if there is any sense in asking the young to sacrifice something in the name of vague ideals which would never make them rich? I understand all the reasons for disappointment and I deem most of them justified, though examples of those who had successfully countered the aforementioned phenomenon does not fully justify the aforementioned defeatism. Resolution of that problem would not only help Serbia, but rather the whole mankind, though we shall have to accept the fact that it would take long to suppress or uproot the said phenomenon.

But is the above portrayal applicable to all the young? It maybe true that so-called liberal circles of our society are making, I would say, a methodological mistake. Perhaps we err when observing or scrutinizing a wrong group, that is a part thereof which is not a representative sample of Serbia's young. It is unrealistic to expect a more massive participation of the young in the political life in non-extreme circumstances. Thus, in my mind, the biggest problem is part of the Serb young, who are on the other side, who confront us (I assume that the general stands of readers of my texts are similar to mine, in view of the publication in which this text is going to appear), namely,

the afore-mentioned, various right-wing organisations. I assume that citizens active in those organizations are representative of the other part of Serbia (though our part is oft called *The Other Serbia*). Surely that our opponents from the other part of Serb society are not massively engaged in activities of those organizations, despite their leanings, and surely such organizations are characterized by diversity of ideological orientations, so characteristic of our people!? But it would be interesting to study which grouping is in percentages more engaged or active (unfortunately it is quite clear is the second one is more numerous.) It is clear that the other side is more dedicated or active. With the benefit of hindsight, or in historical terms, it is easily inferred that the right-wing forces have always been more disciplined, more united and more prone to finding a common goal and method than their opponents. The foregoing may be explained by the nature of their ideologies. That gives them a head-start, as it is clear in this case. But then, we cannot do much about that aspect of their make-up, for it would be well-nigh impossible to change that part of society. What we can however do is to actively and efficiently counter them. Another difficult task.

But between us and them there is a large part of those who can be influenced. The young who are becoming politically aware, who shall soon vote for the first time, persons yet to be shaped into personalities. And the two, aforementioned Serbias are fighting to win them over. And it seem to me that our side is losing that battle. So wherein lies the crux of the problem?

I tend to see that crux in stormy developments on the 17th of March 2004. In that explosion of fury and violence I was most hurt by the fact that thousands of the young played truant that day (though with the permission of their teachers) and took to the streets succumbing to the nationalistic frenzy and fervor which those days shook up the streets of Belgrade and other cities. Similar manifestations happen during important matches of our national teams, and we all know who the targets are and which slogans are shouted. I must draw a parallel with what I would call *my time* (how strange that sounds!), that is with the time when I was attending the secondary-school or even primary one. Then the young also took part in protests, but the character of those protests was quite different. Then we protested against election rigging, and demanded democracy ... Surely some youngsters then too had different motives, and surely many used those rallies and protests to give vent to their other frustrations. One can even say that those protests bore the nationalistic hallmark too and that the underlying poverty, resulting from the failed national project, propelled and fuelled them.

However, there is one vast difference. Those who in their youth demand free elections and those who in their youth chant *Kill, slaughter* shall most certainly evolve into different personalities. In all likelihood the former

shall follow in our footsteps, unless something affects them so much to change their orientation. However, an inverse process cannot be precluded.

It is not unusual to see the young attracted or lured by fiery nationalistic slogans. And on that level such a phenomenon is difficult to counter. It is difficult to write a fiery and catchy tune about human rights and facing up to the war crimes (though the others in their songs clearly expose their views on war crimes). Of course, I am exaggerating, but I would nonetheless like to say that we should not expect much from those in very tender years. Of course I remember that in the 90's many young chanted the *Red Gang*, and similar. But the whole story had a different backdrop. At the time young protesters admitted that they were on the streets demanding ouster of Milosevic and his Red Gang, and combatting for the introduction of democracy and free elections. Those with vague notions of democracy then strove to read something about it (as I did) and things took the right course. Of course there were opposite cases. Some disenchanted with politics are getting on our nerves now (though we need them so much), while others, after the fragmentation of the opposition block, embraced different or contrary ideas. However the overall mood in the society was different, and that is an irrefutable fact. But had you asked a young boy on 17th March the reasons behind his street protest, he would have replied that he was there because Siptari were killing our people, torching our monasteries, and then would go on to list all kinds of retaliatory measures and actions he wanted to be taken against all of them, all the while shouting adequate slogans and raising his arms. Therefore it is difficult to draw any humane ideology from such a story? In a year or two that boy shall turn a voter. As will many of his peers. But, alas, as the polls indicate such a youngster is surrounded by the alike-minded people at home, or within the immediate family fold, thus we can rule out any re-education within the family circle. I have long stopped counting on schools, for schools sent them to the streets during the 17th March protests. Of course with best intentions.

This whole story about the young in the best way speaks of key features of the bulk of problems of our society. They are not simple (and that truth is easily detectable, isn't it), they cannot be viewed just from one angle, they are not likely to disappear overnight, and in fact they are in our midst to stay. Therefore we face an uphill battle against them. Hence the worst thing we can currently do is to state with astonishment and shock that today children enthuse over war and other criminals and hate other peoples about whom they know nothing, or regret that in the best times the young were more politically and socially engaged. It is also wrong to endeavour to re-activate those once politically active. In fact it is a sheer loss of time. They have grown up, they are mature, they shall realize the truth, if there is even a slight chance for such

a realization. And it is up to us to do our utmost to channel those youngsters in the right direction, and help them evolve in the right way. And don't worry, there shall be opportunities for such an undertaking. For we all tend to learn more as we grow up.

Nebojša Đerić

(Novi Sad)

THE COUNTRY WHICH I LOVE

Citizens of Novi Sad, good day to you. Citizens of Vojvodina, good day to you. Citizens of Serbia, good day to you. Citizens of Serbia temporarily working abroad, good day to you. Citizens with dual citizenship, good day to you. I wish you all a good day in the country which we love- in Serbia!

We all live in the same country, in Serbia, and we all hail from Serbia, or we were born in another country, or we work or are schooled in another country, but Serbia is always dear to our hearts.

We love this country, we are proud of it, we suffer together with it, we rejoice with it, it is the country in which we can make progress, develop ourselves, school ourselves, marry, and live happily till the end of our lives.

But how we go about that?

How we show our love for this country in different ways?

How come that love of the country entails killing for it ?

How come that love of the country for someone implies hiding and protecting criminals?

How come that love of one's country means a blind trust of some in the words of church dignitaries?

How come that such love for some implies spiting the whole world?

I love this country....but I am a traitor!

I wish that all citizens of this country lived in peace, equality, harmony and in full respect of civic and human rights. I wish that everyone could speak in his or her mother tongue, without being beaten or insulted. I don't

want anyone to feel threatened in the country of Serbia just because he or she is not of a proud Serb origins.

I love this country... but I am a foreign mercenary!

I want all the graffiti with the nationalistic-chauvinistic-racist messages on the walls of schools, hospitals, football stadiums walls and bridges in Serbia be painted over.

I love this country...but I also like lesbians and homosexuals!

I wish that human rights be fully respected. I wish that people of different sexual orientations be protected from stoning. I wish equality for all citizens of Serbia.

I love this country ...but I am an Ustashi and Muslim!

I wish that all those who committed crimes against the Croat, Bosniak, Albanian and Serb people in my name be prosecuted. I want them to be punished. I don't want to live with them in the same country. I wish that citizens of this country be exempted from the collective guilt. I want us to reconcile with our neighbors.

I love this country...but you are lying that you love it!

I wish that hate speech stopped. I wish that nationalism be treated as something bad, that it be condemned. I wish that nationalists be punished. I want all of us to remember how nationalism inflicted so much evil on all of us living in Serbia.

I love this country....on whose side are you?

I don't want a repeat of recent past. I don't want to go on watching on TV screen the faces of those people who have inflicted on so much evil, pain, suffering, death, hatred and suffering on citizens of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo and who continue to manipulate the Serb people from the Hague by allegedly defending Serbia from internal and external enemies.

I sometimes ask myself if my wishes are unrealistic!?! Am I indeed on the wrong side? Are changes in Serbia possible ?

In June 2005 I attended a panel-discussion on human rights in Zrenjanin. The discussion was very interesting, but poorly attended. Of few local activists in audience, only two actively participated in discussion. I was one of them, and the other was a girl hungry for answers from the panelists.

That girl was interesting because of her energy, her stance, her struggle for her ideas, her genuine wish see Serbia finally change for the better. Also something interesting was written on her T-shirt, for it provide the answer to all my questions, to all striving for changes, to all my genuine efforts in my capacity of the activist, peace-loving youngster, and consistent fighter for human rights.

And the following was written on her T-shirt: "1 October, 2 October, 3 October, 4 October, 5 October and-1 April".

And really, what has changed in Serbia since 5 October 2000? Why was I then so happy? Was it because that day was sunnier and more beautiful like no other day in the past 10 ugly years only for me?

What's the saying? I pledge...who dares look into your eyes...

I then trusted that man. And Europe trusted him. There was a palpable turnaround...things were improving full-throttle Serbia was on the path to Europe. I was happy!

One man at the time did difficult things: he "dragged" Serbia towards Europe. He did not want Serbia to stop on the road to the desired goal. The process of painful and difficult reforms was in full swing. And he assumed all the responsibility in order to prevent any glitch in that process. They vilified him, accused him of being the German spy and the Serb traitor, but he did not care. He kept saying that Serbia should not stop its reforms, for if Serbia ground to a standstill ...

Unfortunately his fear that Serbia might grew dispirited in that process proved to be justified. That Wednesday on 12 March 2003., Serbia ground to a standstill.

For a while Serbia stood still and then it began going back to square one, that is, to those bleak times which characterized the 90's.

At a lecture of the Helsinki Committee "School of Democracy" Latinka Perović replied negatively to the question whether there was anyone in Serbia capable of assuming a great responsibility and energetic enough to steer Serbia again towards the European course.

Many lecturers of the "School of Democracy", exposed their views on our sad story before and after 5 October 2005. Regrettably none of them had optimistic views of this country which I love and in which I want to live. It seems to me nothing can change for the better here.

I was to a certain extent influenced by positive and optimistic stands of Dusan Mijic, an entrepreneur, and his insistence on personal responsibility for our actions and deeds.

What is very sad is the fact that Serbia again has very bad relations with its neighbors. After a "democratic changeover" in the year 2000, borders which used to separate us for 10 years, became once again accessible. The new authorities began re-building and strengthening good neighborly relations with Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and even Kosovo.

People started traveling to the newly-emerged states. Economic co-operation was renewed. The light was seen at the end of tunnel. And Serbia then wanted to join Europe.

Unfortunately those days are long gone by. Serbia made an U turn as and started reviving the 90's era. Now we have "democratic authorities" which

have managed to sour anew our relations with the neighboring countries. We are back to square one.

The only novelty is the emergence of a new inter-state problem, the one with Macedonia. Now we have come full circle. European Union is on our doorstep, on doorstep of Serbia, while the authorities of this country are bent on isolating us anew from our Balkans midst.

As if we are fated to be people apart...to be "Heavenly People."

So Europe just continue your journey, stop waiting for us.

Miloš Gajić

(Beograd)

HOMEWORK

Every citizen born after the 50's is a witness to historical events and also to historical paradoxes. But the issue is whether they are aware of those events, of their own role in those turbulent developments on the public scene. Are they aware that daily political events later turn into historical ones, and that as of late that process is accelerated, as the prominent philosophers have already established: We are directly experiencing history.

The aforementioned citizens grew up in the state or federation composed of republics, in so-called Socialist Federal Republic. Those republics with their different nationalities and religions lived in brotherhood and unity in that unique and well-reputed state.

Fifteen years ago, after the break-up of that idyllic state, every republic with its hard-earned independence, often also paid in blood tribute, is striving to become part of a fast-evolving project: the EU state. What a paradox!

Are we trying to resuscitate our old selves or we are organizing ourselves along the lines on which rested the state which we have so easily renounced, with all the accompanying dire consequences. That is the basic link between the republic in which I live, Serbia and European Union. To go back to square one, to go back to where you naturally belong, and to the place from which you single-handedly excluded yourself. To go back under the condition of fully acknowledging the recent errors, and adopting a new code of rules. Therefore the initial question affects and is related to all us.

How big is the individual responsibility for all the crimes committed under various pretexts? Some defended unprotected, some defended independence. The issue of responsibility is a specially sensitive one in our milieu, because several generations grew up in the socialist collectivism in which success was shared evenly by all, while failures were simply ignored or denied.

So, what has in fact happened to us? That is the question pondered by the young generation, but also by those who directly took part in destruction of the then existing civilized, European and ultimately humane values.

Firstly we witnessed the ascent of the Leader. The society in which the mood of collectivism persisted 10 years after the death of Josip Broz, was meandering in the self-management socialism, thus maturing for the new tasks, the new leader of the strong-arm system, as we like to say. And then the Leader emerged with the idea of protecting of all Serbs in the region, that is, in the republics of the SFRY, from hostile neighbours. In that way he supplanted the self-managing socialism by the historically established national one. While we were all busily building walls between ourselves and mistrust too, in the region prevailed a contrary trend, the one of unification, heralded by the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War.

Masses of citizens or the people recognized the rising political star or the pop icon who was telling them just what they wanted to hear. Like any savvy TV star our Leader did that very well. But in contrast to his pop culture colleagues he wanted his fans to do what he told them. Each year he won anew the Popularity Oscar. True pop stars were on the defensive, in garages, with guitars, under the tents, at the leaders' rallies with accordions. That was the Serb *clubbing list* in the 90's, and the best watering holes and popular haunts were: renowned trenches in Croatia and Bosnia, on the first front-line.

Top five performers: President and four vice-presidents. The worst thing was that it occurred to some cleverer performers to look for their salvation in the Church and they started looking for it in the downtown Belgrade and in Greater Belgrade area, though that trend-following Church, like the similar ones, was in one of the best haunts from the clubbing list for that month, that is, probably somewhere in the Croat Slavonia. Then all neighbours of ours already bore the ethnic hallmark, and such a stance was not only typical of the Serb Church, but also of churches of other nations, which thus contributed to the regional *military rave*. In such a mood, when it was well known who was close to us, and who was not, "take care of your nearest and dearest" was quickly transformed into "kill your nearest and dearest", while other commandments asked for an indefinite *time out*. Thus "do not steal...do not commit adultery...do not kill...do not commit a perjury" were morphed into their massive, opposites - those considered our

neighbours were raped, killed and plundered, there were many perjuries especially on TV, while notably the high clerics considered it quite a hit to have their pictures taken while holding kalishnikovs or blessing members of special death squads on the eve of their new, deadly adventures. During all that time a system of values indicating at least immoral aspects of the whole undertaking has never been put in place. There was some intellectual resistance and some values were still respected, but their already slight impact was dispelled by the frenzied tornado of war cries and the general belligerent mood. Then columns of youngsters left their homes and homeland for ever. If we understand the young as the country's future, then we have lost it during the war, and have been trying to recover it for years now in the peacetime.

Organized societies have too their strata of crime-inclined renegades and dissidents. Such personalities were sidelined, and barely surviving at the bottom of the social ladder before the 90's. Then, in that decade, someone calculated the percentage of our educated and literate citizens, assessed their needs and wishes and offered them the final product: the New Leader. Namely some concluded that we lost a lot of time and that the time was ripe for installment of the strong-arm regime.

The time was up for the less educated social strata to say what they thought about the existing state of affairs, and to have their wishes finally fulfilled; that pandering to the lower strata of the society was symbolically called anti-bureaucratic revolution, for we have always disliked resolutions. The revolution was spearheaded by the greatest bureaucrats of all, a banker by profession and a leader by calling. Slobodan Milošević pricked his ears, listened to all demands at a massive rally, then said that he has not heard them properly, but that in any case all those who deserved it would be arrested. All peace-loving people in the then republics incredulously watched him and minded their own business. For if they had reacted violently, and shouted that he was wrong, they would not have been peaceful people. And thus the worst among us took up the leading positions and led us into an indescribable odyssey of familiarization with brotherly peoples and republics. We were all given sniper-guns in order to get better acquainted with our fellow-nationals and natural wealth.

Now we should also analyze which link of togetherness proved to be so weak –was it the one made up of peaceful and anti-war- oriented citizens of the then state? Why some have failed to prevent the worst-case scenario? What was the right way to counter the war-mongering campaign, was it the establishment of anti-war associations? Had Europe and the world failed to counteract the ugly phenomenon? Had not they done the only thing that was in their power-they passed resolutions, appealed to common sense.

No-one can accuse any observer of failing to prevent a brawl with the whole neighbourhood. Therefore I think that we are ultimately responsible for our actions. It transpired that putting faith in the common sense and intelligence of some strata of societies in all the then republics-was wrong. In Serbia academics were those who drew up the *Memorandum* as a supreme document which justified the war for liberation of allegedly “our” land in the neighbouring backyard! The biggest stir was caused by Sarajevo mothers who protested against the looming war danger. I remember that I hoped that their desperate move would make the rest of the state see sense. But an adequate response to their plea failed to materialize. I think that then I acquired the need and ability to recognize hope in a social gesture of movement. Then I was a 12 or 13-year old boy. Like my peers I listened to the latest MTV hits, imitated movements of Mc Hammer rep-singer with my mates, attended football matches, went dancing and watched mutilated bodies on the prime time TV news. I remember that in the fourth grade my homework was to watch the live broadcast of the 1989 Gazimestan rally. As at the time I had phobia of politicians because I thought that they served to declare wars, I barely managed to sit two minutes before the TV set, and having not heard any such declaration, I quickly turned off the TV set and went out to play. Since at the time no-one openly mentioned war, my phobia must have been linked to the infantile instinct. We all have intuition which helps us distinguish between evil and good, and deep, deep down, inside our psyche we know which elements and conduct lead to good and which to evil. We have different approaches to accomplishment of our goals, and that is necessary and normal. But what is it that makes us keep mum and close our eyes before open manifestations of primitive conduct and evil? What is one to do when someone decides that our natural anti-evil instinct should be morphed into an internal institution of evil, and supports such an intention with arguments that the evil we see sporadically is not in fact evil, if it is done for the general, national cause and also for our own benefit. Then one easily recognizes consequences of collectivism which is the only well recognized and known and even, perhaps, a still desirable, phenomena in this country. That lack of personal initiative is a key element in explaining the humane and economic devastation of this region. However it bears mentioning that the then existing liberal, peaceful, and cosmopolitan elites were not vocal enough or united enough to uphold key principles of contemporary civilization, the principles to be adopted and respected by my generation, those very principles which were not seriously accepted by generation of my parents. Some leaders of the newly-accepted EU members, leaders of some central European states, deny the very concept of human rights and the existence of the third, NGO sector. Moreover they label it as a

major evil. Sometimes it is illusory to insist on those postulates in the states and societies whose very order is contrary to those notions. Of course, every man, even a nation have different understandings and concepts of freedom. Some would like to retain borders, for though they are already in Europe, at least in the virtual one, some people and politicians think that an overdose of freedom may make us sick. It is partly true from the standpoint of individual who would be thus closer to anarchy than to his social milieu. In those terms it can be said that we, as a an enchained nation, living for years in a dictatorship, suddenly got too much freedom and consequently destroyed the whole region. Now in this sobering-up stage we see a vague shape of a friend who having had once had similar experiences is now trying with some understanding to help us get up...but...under the condition...

Under the condition that we live and let other live, that is fully respect human rights. That is the condition imposed by that friend of ours, EU, our neighbour which is uniting after our break-up. As a member of the generation which is likely to experience anew cohabitation with people of different faiths and nations, I think that it is necessary that we, single-handedly, without external conditions, set some guidelines and goals for ourselves and others, the limits never to be trespassed. We should never again allow election rigging, we should never again tolerate any primitive movement or gesture made in the name of a suspicious, general national welfare. We should demonstrate that we want a state of united citizens, of individuals responsible towards themselves and others, the state characterized by individual quality as opposed to the state exemplifying ideological quantity – collectivism. We should have the government opposed to the worst of us living at the expense of others. We must create an atmosphere and elite ready to counter any evil, to respond to any manifestation of militarism, either coming from the streets or from any level of authorities. Such shows of militarism like any contagious virus should be immediately stamped out by just and legal procedures. By extension we should demonstrate our acumen by rallying liberal forces whenever it is necessary. That applies to the new generation too, my or our generation, and adoption of such values must be kick-started as soon as possible, in order to boost the current civic-minded structures to take a firm stand against retrograde forces and their destructive populism. By simply accepting liberal economy which rewards entrepreneurial spirit, hard work and expertise, the citizenry would be encouraged to accept individual responsibility and in turn would demand the transparent work of parties and scrutinize their ideas: how good are their concepts, are they retrograde, etc. If deemed such then they could then be proclaimed harmful for the health of the young and old. Be it utopia or not, it is our right to dream of the least bad society.

What I expect from myself and others is a constant work and self-improvement, while the cultural, social and economic, global competition continues, in order to transform ourselves and our generation into people not ashamed of their personal values in any position from which the society of worthy individuals is to be built.

Milan Zaviša

(Novi Sad)

AN INTERESTING LIFE IN - BOREDOM

I am bored ! This sounds more like a sentence from a sci-fi film dealing with the key issues of the year 2075 and general ways of survival of the remaining humanoid mankind. But the problem emerges when I utter that sentence. For I don't want people to understand it as an expression of my desperate impotence and anger in the face of fact that I wrongly leading my own life. No, in fact at issue is quite a different matter which I shall try to explicate as much as I can.

In other words, I don't want any more to listen to people who for want of their own interests, other than run-of-the mill gossip and re-telling of their own ordinary life trifles, can only reiterate much-used and –abused phrase “how life is indeed wonderful here ..we find life very interesting here...we are never bored!”. Well such utterings must be stopped! Nonsensical nature of this and similar statements is per se obvious. In fact I would really like to live in a disinteresting country (I am intentionally using that adjective, for the sintagm “a boring country” would imply other meanings.) In recent years I have been pondering our social reality and its odd phenomena thereof. The foregoing made me take a firm decision not to allow myself to live in such a reality in the near and far future! All diversity and lethal “fun” of the local life, which many here stubbornly refuse to renounce, I would gladly exchange for a normal, peaceful, and even, boring day. No, my dear friends, I am not referring to my renunciation of the days without stress, haste, fury, nervousness, and other precious aspects of our life. On the contrary, such aspects of your and my life are here to stay.

However, when one exists in the society in which one social activity, so-called politics, occupies the first place in the things determining the life of every single individual, then it is too much. As of late I am bothered very much by that fact. ... By extension I don't like the local writers to be those who have most material or food for their artistic creations, for they are the ones who are served in huge quantities most foolishness every single day. Luckily enough most of them, for want of a genuine talent, stand no chance of "processing" such nourishment, so we cannot see what this society has morphed or how it continues to develop in a convoluted way. But I am still thinking about –boredom. Can you imagine how wonderful it would be if boredom entered the lives of people of this undefined country. Of course I am talking about boredom, and not vacuity. Vacuity is lethal, while boredom is desirable. Then after a while, after a longish period of boredom, we would be able to discuss how bad it is to live such a boring life with all those boring people (contrary to the currently boring people who bore us to death with their boring stories). Yes, I would like us to reach the stage when we would be able to discuss the above without problems and without worried glances of some *freaks* who clearly dislike your or mine story (let us overlook the fact that they don't understand it), and talk quietly, with a nice background music, fully aware that we have finally managed to halt the events which had the capacity to surprise us so terribly and overtake us and ultimately made us dependently rely on their terrible consequences.

So, long live an interesting life as the icing on the cake!

Maja Lonhardt
(Beograd)

ESTHETICS IN MEDIA

What is beauty? It is very difficult to give an universal answer to that question. Definition of that notion changed or varied throughout epochs. That notion was an eternal inspiration for poets. Many philosophers also dealt with the esthetics-related issues. One of best known English philosophers, David Hume, dedicated an essay to beauty: "Beauty is not a inherent feature of things; it exists only in spirit which observes it, and every spirit has a different perception of beauty" (David Hume, "On Criteria of Taste", 1757). So, one subject can repel some people, and attract others, not because of its characteristics, but because of feelings of our spirit in its capacity of critic. Therefore according to Hume beauty lies in taste or feelings of reader and observer. Our personal taste shall be the only argument for determining something, that is, making us say that something is beautiful or ugly.

Different cultures have different perceptions of beauty. For example as regards female beauty, anthropologists have noted that some "primitive" social communities favoured the beauty of rotund women and cherished the custom of fattening women before their weddings. On the other hand, most modern societies favour slim women. In old Greece and in Renaissance beauty was considered a special harmony between parts of body within the body as a whole. So only harmonious things were beautiful.

But some things nevertheless have their universal value and eternal beauty, most notably some classical literary works as well as works of arts which are much admired globally even today. But when Hume spoke about eternal beauty he emphasized that such beauty was not accessible to the vast

majority of people, for they could not perceive in the right way its very complex structure.

We are living in an era of a fast-developing technology. Means of mass communications contributed to accessibility of beauty. We can now see beautiful world landscapes, to which we cannot travel, but we can nonetheless admire their beauty on our home TV screens. We can listen to a performance of a top concert musician without buying ticket for his concert or attending his live performance. Books are today published in hundreds of languages and in millions of copies, thus that kind of entertainment cum enjoyment is accessible to most people in the world.

But there is also a flip side of that phenomenon. Means of mass communication created a mass culture dominated by homogeneity, unification and devoid of individuality and diversity. Mass production caused loss of authenticity.

In such a world beauty has been imposed as imperative. Ideals cum icons of all girls are photo models who are successful and skinny. Girls stop eating in emulation of their idols, and sometimes even end up with a disease-anorexia. Some authors stressed that the most famous doll, Barbie doll, was more dangerous than video games, oft criticized for inciting children's aggressiveness. And the reason thereof is simple: Barbie doll is made like a perfect woman, with a perfect body. Thus it may cause frustration among girls and consequently their wish to emulate it.

Most female magazines are dedicated to beauty. I think that women should emphasize or rather flaunt their beauty, such trump card should not be remain hidden. However we sometimes feel guilty, or not on top form, if we don't go regularly to beauty parlours or hair-dressers, even if we don't go to solarium. But there is also a spritual beauty, to which we should aspire. That was the confirmed by Immanuel Kant, a great German philosopher, Hume's peer, who also dealt with issues of esthetics. For example, he made a distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. In those terms he said that beauty destroyed old age, and that sublime and noble characteristics should gradually replace the beautiful ones (Immanuel Kant, "On Beautiful and Sublime", 1763).

Of course television as a visual medium must above all attract our attention by things which please our eyes. However simple things are beautiful, while, those much-adorned quickly turn into kitch. In this country many try to attract masses of people in a rather distasteful manner and by resorting to exaggerations. Thus overdressed and over made-up singers become idols of the majority of people. And as we know the majority is rarely right. Notably when that majority is composed of semi-literate and semi-educated people. Their unstinting admiration of kitch exemplified by their icons, indicates that they must have been colour-blind for most of their life.

Similar situation is noted elsewhere in the world. Fashion is now a mixed bag. Many incompatible things are put together to create the contemporary fashion. But as the West has more money, much more is invested in beauty. Esthetic surgery is very popular among the celebrities, but also increasingly so among "ordinary people" who have money to indulge in that fad. For example it is very popular to imitate the nose of Nikole Kidman, the mouth of Angelina Joilie, breasts of Pamela Anderson or hair-style of Jeniffer Anniston. Everyone wants to look like someone else, and thus so-called *copy-paste* beauty is created.

I however think that in this whole spectrum of beauty possibilities we must find the one compatible with our personality. Therefore we must sift or filter through information which the media send us and take our own stance, instead of becoming just another victim of mass culture. Today such a stance is linked to esthetics, and tomorrow it could be linked to something much more serious.

Dejan Pataki
(Novi Sad)

“YOU ARE WHAT YOU WATCH”

Peter Gabriel, a renowned multi-media artist, at his concerts often commented, in-between his songs, that the way you dress denoted the kind of man you were, and that in one period optimists maintained that one was what one read. Gabriel ended his comments by asserting that “In the 21st century you are what you watch”.

In trying to explain to myself the phenomenon of vastly retrograde, primitive, semi-literate, latently fascisoid, arrested in development Serbia, I concluded that the lethal media contents played a major role in such a development. I find it hard to talk about the print media in view of the two factors: firstly, in Serbia 50% of population is illiterate, and secondly the largest part of the print media are nor in fact –newspapers. Namely after just 10 minutes of reading papers which in this country are called tabloids, I sense emergence of certain chemical-physical processes in my body, which are best explained by some medical terms: indigestion, hysteria, unease, dizziness, and even murderous instinct.... Electronic media, that is, television, as an equivalent of the aforementioned sub-species, are a far more interesting and most certainly, more influential factor in shaping the mind-set of population. A reference point, or a focal point in most homes is television set, and the whole household is focused on its emissions/programs. During the war television had a leading role in the country. It was nearly as important as the police and army.

When analysing TV programs served hot or cold to the population at large I must exclude local television networks. I am not sufficiently familiar with programs thereof, but I suspect that while watching just a small sample of their

broadcasts would experience the same, negative chemical processes which I had mentioned in the previous paragraph.

In my comprehensive analysis of influential TV channels I would start with the least influential, *Sve O Sportu*, or SOS channel. In technical terms that channel is still on the lowest rung of the media evolution, that is, in an embryonal stage. It is a blatantly amateurish TV while its graphic lay-out is on the level of technology of early 90's cell phones. Though it is allegedly a sports channel, it oft acquires a political dimension, because of its focus on recurring incidents during the sports matches involving players and fans from countries which used to belong to the SFRY. During live broadcasts the journalist' head is placed on a heavily tattooed body of a renowned basketball player!

Television Košava reminds me of the previous period and its prime movers, family Milošević – Marković, notably its younger members. This TV has a “hero” which must be mentioned. That hero is a male called Nole. His programs should be of erotic character, but the predominant sexual element thereof is frequent “verbal masturbation” of the aforementioned presenter and his tendency to visibly harass cameramen and other technical staff.

Private television of Bogoljub Karić is becoming increasingly private, and decreasingly public service. In any case its program are of a higher quality and much better than the other programs aired in Serbia. Though fully aware of private character of that TV I must nonetheless note that they tend to bombard their viewers with, for example, features on donation of some generators to a backwater place in Kosovo. Of course the focus is on donator himself-Bogolljub Karic in flesh. The same phenomenon occurred during the coverage of a recent incident in Macedonia. Namely a Macedonian citizen violated Macedonian laws and was, “surprisingly” arrested and put in a Macedonian jail. Musical talents of younger members of a large Karic family are much hyped and flaunted on that TV channel (even in prime time news programs). The last adventure of that media house named after the onomatopoeic sound of knitting is in fact a throwback to a bad pornographic film!

Pink Television is a phenomenon per se. The impact of that media house is evident and important. The fact that the whole generation of youngsters who grew up in this country were called *Pink generation* attests to the foregoing. That TV contributed to the economic collapse of the society and the moral and ethical retardation or rather regression thereof. Esthetics of that TV channel is based on the most primitive principles. Notion of beauty ends up with the sets, and superficiality is dominant. Absence of taste, harmony and culture along with the abundant presence of triviality, small-town mind-set and rudeness are trademarks of that television. Though that media house is not represented by Komrakov or Vucelic, marketing of virtual reality seems to be an exclusive task of TV Pink. Only thanks to communication policy-makers of that television channel

widows and wives of war criminals have been turned into icons or ideals of the Serb housewives. In *Grand Show* there is a veritable invasion of primitive people and singers with upper body silicone implants who often authoritatively discuss “key” issues of this society. Trademark of that television are also Latin American soap operas of very poor quality and aggressive-rude dialogues between hosts and guests on a spate of political talk shows. Discussions often centre on the following issues: Is a criminal Legija a hero or not, or, is the Capital Investment Minsiter, Velja Ilić, an archtype of aggressive primitive or not?

In analyzing the state-run television, which increasingly aspires to the name of the state-run broadcasting service and to charge us for that privilege, I must comment director of that “institution.” The manner of his naming to that post, and notably his past are very compromising and speak volumes of the Radio Television Serbia programs. Statements of Aleksandar Tijanić are brazen and discriminating and rude. Public service to be tailored by the former Information Minister, of the most ill-informed politician in history, of the man who said: “If Zoran Đinđić survives, Serbia shall perish...” shall hopefully not be reduced to only one frame which this self-styled legalism-minded government could propose. Public service should offer to its viewers an objective, unbiased, discreet, decent, culturally diverse, well-packaged and relatively financially independent program...To expect the incumbent director to create such a program would be tantamount to expecting Petar Lukovic to write introduction to a history textbook penned by Radoš Ljušić or Zvezdan Jovanović invoking his right to become a conscientious-objecter.

In this list TV B92 was not mentioned for its programs, contents, and quality differ from the other televisions. Negative But this media house because of overcommercialization of its programs has lost on its quality. Barring domestic investigative programs like *Insider* and airing of the BBC documentary program, the rest of its output is very average.

If we agree with Peter Gabriel’s thought mentioned in the beginning of this text, perhaps we may establish some cause-consequence connections. Our society is primitive, uncouth, naive, superficial, and shallow just like TV soap operas. It is ever ready to repeat the same old stupidities, all the while thinking about a better and happier life for all citizens. Our current social order is a pre-political one, for only such a society can so easily fall into traps laid by so-called journalists or –hacks. Our milieu is the way it is because an invasion of Latin American serials or soap-operas has taken on the role of educational program, because highly-paid call girls are promoted as the model of successful women, because public discourse of politicians, notably some ministers is awash with dirty words and curses, because it is quite normal to insult, to lie, to be vulgar and rude while cameras are on in any studio or in parliament. That is why part of younger generations reminds me of an admixture of teletabis, *Grand stars* and

protected witnesses. That is why the *Bacon and Trumpet Festivals* shall become our “brand names”, in addition to Bitef, Fest or Sterija Theatre festival. That is why the witnesses of the bus accident near Zrenjanin stood smoking on Tisa bridge, while passengers were drowning, that is why we had disgraceful panel discussions at the Law and Mechanical Engineering Faculty in Belgrade, that is why we were the only ones who did not have a state delegation during the tribute-paying ceremony to the Auschwitz victims...

Vladeta Milin

(Beograd)

FOOTBALL FIELD

I am at a stadium. Though I am aware of importance of the match, I stare vacantly at the field. Those around me are not frenetic either. And the match goes on.

Maybe the length of the match is the crux of the matter, that is of my disinterest. The match is too long to entice a stronger support from the stand. The very game is becoming monotonous. The feeling that despite all the effort and trouble we don't have a favorable result is terribly de-motivating. The game is turning nasty with players increasingly acting as veritable brutes, and the field is so muddy that it is hard to distinguish between the players of the two teams.

Yes, interest in this kind of diversion has definitely waned...

Yet I remember the better days... People used to root passionately, as if their lives were at stake. So great was their identification with the game in the field that their tension oft spilled over into not so innocent fights at the spectators stand. Groups of fans fought with all the means available to convince the others that their team was the only one, the best one, the one. Undoubtedly there was much more passion during the games, but I nonetheless think that it is good that those times are behind us.

But it is at the same time clear that the current apathy is de-motivising the players. If they try hard to play well they do it because of their personal reasons and not because of increasingly indifferent spectators. But the new aspect is not good either.

So deeply immersed in thoughts, I notice belatedly that I have climbed to higher rows. I am no longer too close to the muddy field and thus I don't have

such a detailed insight into every single particular of the game. Now my view is broader and it can encompass the whole field. Those down there shall continue to push and kick each other, to run and try to score, there shall be no drastic changes, so why should I not try to see who else is at the stadium. To see if new fans have arrived and if some have given up and quietly left.

It also occurred to me that I am now in a better position because of the proximity of the exit gate. But I don't intend to leave, I know that it is a better solution, but it is not my solution. I feel that I should stay here, for most surely I would not be happy to leave without knowing the final score. Leaving is not for me, I am too interested in the outcome.

In this grand stand of mine I see people similar to me. They are sitting and watching developments down there, they are tired and nervous and want something more, but sometimes it seems that they want something more, they they are hoping in vain. It seems that they lack a leader, or more players able to organize or channel this aspiration. I am also aware that something is amiss.

An interesting situation is developing on my right hand side. The racket there is incessant, perhaps the fan group is better organized there. Tam-tam sounds of their drums and high-pitched tones of their sirens are deafening. But it seems to me that the majority of those present at the stadium have grown accustomed to their irritating presence, and consequently started ignoring them. I don't know how they succeed in ignoring those terribly loud fans. I cannot. Then I notice that they are joined by disappointed fans eager for action, even of this kind. Fans on that right hand stand encourage the team in line with the Serb mind-set, namely they whistle and insult the players because they are not producing the desired result. Though I appreciate their will to do something I am nonetheless put off by their stance and irritating noise that they produce.

Fans from the left stand have dispersed, or moved to the other stands. Now they have joined ranks with the fans at the right hand stand and started rooting. I am surprised, but I find their manoeuvre very interesting. I am watching them. I don't know what I feel about their ambition to take a more active part of this event. Perhaps I am just prone to ridicule their pathetic attempt. For I think that they know that after the arrest of their "cheer-leader" they have lost nearly all the power. I could laugh out loudly but I don't want to do that. I am not a malicious person plus I am also worried about their persistence. I think that they can grow stronger if in the general apathy they are not taken seriously. If all grow quiet, at least their few voices shall be heard.

I feel dizzy because of that that abrupt side-changing....from the right to the left stand. I feel slightly depressed. Then I first look down and then lift my eyes to the sky. Just like when I used to exercise in the primary school and

for the first time felt the importance of moving the entire body for the sake of improving its flexibility.

After renewing my spiritual and also bodily alertness, I stare before me. I don't know how to explain what I see: it is a conglomerate of the most different people. Some are totally silent, and as far as I remember have never uttered a single word. They are totally enigmatic. I don't know what they think, I don't know why they are still here, why they are present if they are not interested in the match. The others nervously walk to and fro, even during those rare, interesting moments in the field. They have more energy which they aimlessly expend. Those who sell refreshments have the same radius of movement like the aimless spectators but at least they have a goal: to earn some money. And there's nothing controversial about their goal, but I sometimes just wish they did not try so hard to earn something, for their aggressive business conduct sporadically made me miss important moments of the match.

Above that odd mixture of humanity there are boxes. Spectators in those boxes kept changing during the match. Now I cannot see them clearly, but I think most of them are some media personalities, writers, and academicians, standing by some smiling, satisfied VIPs. There are also a lot of photographers there.

I am tired. An overload of information for just one overview.

But I am definitely enjoying the new developments around me. They have revved me up. And now I have found the new reason for my presence at the match: a multitude of people here, too many things are happening here, a lot of manipulation, wishes, disappointments, plans and failures. So much life going around me!

When I compare those people in clothes with those in the field wallowing in the mud, when I see how passionately they root for the victory of their team, then I realize that developments at the stand are much more important. Attention of fans is focused on the field, and mine on the stand. I see the field as a mere illusion. Fans are those who have a lot of life in them, and that is what really matters. They are numerically superior, more essential than the players who owe everything to their fans.

Paradoxically enough, if all present at the stadium woke up and realized their own impact on the game, then the character of the match would change totally and I am convinced that we would have the only result suiting all the spectators.

So, after all, I am glad to be still at the stadium, I know that this is the right place for me. Right here, so high up. And my contribution to realization of the result desired by me and by the majority shall be to confide into someone my thoughts. No, in fact I shall tell my thoughts to all and sundry.