



CIVIS
CIVIS

Association of
Non-Governmental
Organisations of
Southeast Europe

THE ROLE OF CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN SUSTAINABLE PEACE BUILDING IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE

ROUND TABLE:
“*THE ROLE OF CHURCHES AND RELIGIOUS
COMMUNITIES IN SUSTAINABLE PEACE
BUILDING IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE*”

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF:

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Secretary General of the Council of Europe

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President of the Conference of the Rhine Churches

President of the Conference of the Protestant Federation in France

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INTRODUCTION

Round table *“The role of churches and religious communities in sustainable peace building in Southeastern Europe”* was organized by the CIVIS - Association of nongovernmental organizations in SEE, under the auspices of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Terry Davis and with the support of Peace and Crises Management Foundation and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation office in Serbia, on June 20th 2008 in Strasbourg, in the Council of Europe.

The title of the round table itself has left open possibilities to talk about what was the role in past 18 years, what is the role today and what is the perception of the future seen by the participants, wherefore what are their fears and hopes, what should be, from their point of view, avoided, redressed or minimized, what future would we like to have and how to act so we do not leave it only as a wish.

“*Southeast Europe*” is quite a euphemism for ‘Balkan’, in order to avoid its political connotation. Besides as a geographical term, ‘Balkan’ became a pejorative political term with which nobody wants to identify. In the newest history, through the series of tragic conflicts, regressive for Europe at the end of 20th century, ‘Balkan’ confirmed its negative political reputation. Political conflicts turned into conflicts among nations, for what many are blameworthy but not equally, especially for intensifying these conflicts with the identification of national and religious preferences and justifying conflicts with the irreconcilability of existing cultures and civilizations.

For Europe this is not something new. Fifty years ago, with the still unhealed wounds of the horrible war, some people from the countries that were for years generators of conflicts on the European continent, tried to thoroughly change their destiny. What is new indeed is that they have succeeded. And that gives us hope! Reasons for the fears are present now more than ever. Events in the countries of the Former Yugoslavia have shown how these fears are factual, often undervalued, how something that was supposed to be a process of democratization can go catastrophically astray; how the myths about national superiority are jeopardizing, encouraged and used by unscrupulous politicians, could get massive support and end in immense tragedies. This also belongs to a common European experience from which many nothing have learned.

The organizer of this round table, to which are invited priests of different religions and churches, is CIVIS, an association of nongovernmental organizations which are neither church nor religious communities. But they are organizations which plead for peace, which promote tolerance, which organize assistance for the jeopardized and, which for years, have worked on building good relations among countries in this part of Europe.

These values could be defined as universal law, as categorical imperative which could represent a common name for cooperation, regardless of other differences of churches, religious communities and nongovernmental organizations, and independent individuals which share these moral positions.

The firsthand goal of this round table is to talk about problems and to see how participants, priests of different churches, perceive them. One of the bottomless resources of these problems is the widespread inability to hear others. But the long-term goal is to increase, through these meetings and through the work of those participants in their own countries, the number of people and institutions which will promote those values in public and through their work.

Because, as it is known, for evil to win it is enough if good people do nothing; but for good to win it is necessary for a critical mass of people to act in public and with means suitable for the cause..

Prof. dr Zoran Pusić,
President of the CIVIS Association and the President of the Civic committee for human rights, Croatia

APPEAL FROM STRASBOURG

Appeal from the Round Table “The Role of Churches and Religious Communities in Sustainable Peace Building in Southeast Europe” Strasbourg, 19th and 20th June 2008

In the organization of CIVIS - Association of Nongovernmental Organizations in Southeast Europe, and with the support of the Council of Europe, Peace and Crises Management Foundation and Konrad Adenauer Foundation, a round table with the topic: *“The Role of Churches and Religious Communities in Sustainable Peace Building in Southeast Europe”* was organized on 20th of June 2008, in Strasbourg, in the Council of Europe.

We, participants of this Round table, consider each well-intentional, open initiative bound for sustainable peace building in Southeastern Europe as a value itself.

We are convinced that the role of religious communities to actively plead for peace is unavoidable not only because of the presence of different religious communities in the countries of Southeast Europe, which were, not only once, misused for political aims but first of all, because of common moral values which lies in the foundations of these various religions. These values, among other things, are peace among people and nations, love for ours neighbor, respect of individual freedoms until the boundaries of jeopardizing the same freedoms of others, testimony of an easy but hardly applicable maxim: Behave towards others as you would like them to behave towards you.

From our point of view, steps and actions that will lead to greater freedom and greater security of citizens and more resistant democracy in the countries of Southeast Europe should include promotion of ecumenism, stimulation of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation between civil sector and religious communities on common premises.

We believe, from our experience, that modesty and critics of negligence, first of all, in our own environments are good foundation for prevailing of differences and an expression of spiritual strength.

We express hope that this conference is contribution to the process of sustainable peace building in Southeast Europe and decisiveness to continue in our efforts.

We will endeavour that meetings like this, open for all people of good will, continue if possible under the auspices of the Council of Europe, which is a strong symbol of prevailing tough past and openness of fantastic possibilities of future.

Welcome speech of Mr. Ulrich Bunjes

Administrator of the Directorate General of
Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and
Sport of the Council of Europe



Thank you Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen. It is a great honor for me, on behalf of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, to welcome you here to this important inter-religious meeting of high level religious dignitaries and experts. The Secretary General, Mr. Terry Davis, sends his best wishes for a successful, fruitful debate, and he looks forward to receiving any document that you may wish to communicate to him on the proceedings of this conference.

I welcome you to this house of greater Europe devoted to human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Our meeting today looks at a subject which is very topical indeed for the Council of Europe, not only as a prioritized issue in Southeast Europe from a regional perspective, but also from the perspective of role of the religious communities, and has increasingly come into political focus among international community. The Council of Europe is fully aware of the situation in Southeast Europe and is fully aware of its responsibilities.

Allow me to quote just a few examples of what the COE is doing in your area. Most recently a new phase has been initiated in the COE and the European Commission called “Integrated Rehabilitation Project Plan in the Countries of Southeast Europe”. This joint action promotes regional cooperation and encourages the recognition of our shared European architecture heritage. The Ljubljana process of funding heritage rehabilitation in Southeast Europe is another project which aims at ensuring public and private funding for a significant number of the 26 projects selected by national authorities. In March 2004, during the riots in Kosovo, several Serb Orthodox sites were damaged by groups of extremists. It is the most recent, but far from isolated, incident targeting cultural and religious heritage in the Balkans in the past fifteen years. These religious sites damaged in Kosovo are today being repaired by Kosovo Serbs and Kosovo Albanians working together. It is a very successful program. The reconstruction of physical damage in Kosovo has now been turned into an opportunity to rebuild multiethnic relationships and confidence. The COE has a leading role in this cooperation, as we share the reconstruction and implementation commission for Serbian Orthodox religious sites in Kosovo, which was established together with the EU and on the request of UNMIK to oversee the reconstruction process.

Since 2003 the COE regional program for cultural and national heritage in SEE, implemented with the support of the European Commission, has helped the participating countries in preparing the legal and institutional framework to build up the expertise which is essential for modern regional heritage policy which turns heritage into a resource for sustainable economic and social development. Other COE projects include cultural corridors and intercultural cities which create opportunities to move from mere political declarations to practice. In the region, the COE is also organizing trainings and awareness raising activities with judges, prosecutors,

practicing lawyers, academics, NGO representatives, with law enforcement representatives, government officials, human rights monitors, who meet with vulnerable groups. The specific training and dialogue activities with youth organizations, as well as the COE program work against corruption and organized crime in SEE. I think it is safe to say that the region is clearly among the top priorities in all major policy areas within the COE and often together engaged with the EC.

Now, which role do religious communities have in the peace building process? In this regard, allow me first to look at the principles of European policy. The separation between religion and state is one of the corner stones of European constitutional heritage. It is the model that underpins the policies of international organizations and also the COE. This model is composed of three fundamental principals: the freedom of thought, consciousness and religion: the principle that every citizen has equal rights and duties regardless of religious beliefs or philosophical convictions; and the relative autonomy of the state and of religious communities *vis a vis* each other. This being said: Religion always played a role in the policy of the COE, for many years the COE dealt with religion specifically under two aspects. First and very importantly, is the angle of human rights, as laid down notably in article nine of the European Convention of Human Rights which defines the freedom of scope and the freedom of conscious of religion,. and secondly the angle of culture in the widest sense.

In recent years, Europe has faced two major developments which affect the waves and attitudes towards what religion is. On one hand, cultural diversity now affects most, if not all, European societies. It has prompted a search for common values and reference points for social cohesion and intercultural skills. On the other hand we are witnessing the process in which some societies are now giving religious issues and organizations a much more prominent place in public life than in the past. The COE has been involved in dialogue with representatives of different fates for some time. The process started a few years ago and has since gained momentum. The institutional context of this dialogue may be evolving but the underlined objectives have remained the same - to work with religious communities and their role as a driving force for cooperation and dialogue. Religious beliefs and practices like any other human convictions are an expression of cultural identity. This is why we regard religious diversity as a dimension of cultural diversity. This became particularly clear in a series of international conferences, in Casan, and Nisnji Novgorod and recently, at the European conference organized by the Government of San Marino in 2007. I brought to you the report of that important conference in a limited number of copies as available over there on this table. The COE has just concluded a three year reflection process on this issue. I'm talking about the white paper on intercultural dialogue, which has been launched six weeks ago by the foreign ministers of our 47 member states. The promotion of intercultural dialogue is a priority for our organization. Our objective is to develop a long term policy to exploit fully the potential of cultural diversity as a positive and cohesive force in our societies. We believe that religious communities have a tremendous potential in this regard. They can heal wounds, they can build bridges, by working together religious communities can defeat extremists who want to hijack and manipulate fate to propagate violence and hate. They can become an enormous power for peace and tolerance. The White Paper on intercultural dialogue which contains a whole chapter on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue is fully acknowledging this potential. It encourages inter-religious dialogue even if we as a public authority cannot directly participate in inter-religious dialogue ourselves. However, the White Paper also paves the way towards public authorities on one hand and religious communities and belief communities on the other, to address issues of common concern. For example, we

recently said regarding the “*2008 Exchange on Religious Dimension*”, of intercultural dialogue which looked exclusively at teaching religious facts in school and facts about philosophical convictions. Some of you present here today participated in this event.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, this CIVIS conference is an excellent opportunity for dialogue between prominent religious leaders. It is an excellent opportunity to talk to each other and work with each other to convey one common message of tolerance, respect and understanding. On behalf of the Secretary General of the COE I would like to thank you for your initiative and for your readiness to involve us in your work.

Thank you very much.

Welcome speech of Mr. Jean Francois Collange President of Protestant church for Augsburg, Alzas and Loren



It is a fact that religions have a part that is closely related to identity, both individual and national. Although that characteristic is slowly being lost in the west, which is very secularized today, the nations are still viewed through the function of their own religious identity. It is not a secret, unfortunately to anyone, that in some parts of the planet identities lead to paroxysms and conflicts, and can even lead to, if one should believe Samuel Huntington's prognoses, shocks or clash of civilizations.

Invoking God - no matter in what way we worship him, embodies in us, and beyond us, what (as individuals, people or nation) we are and should be. The identities are thus strengthened in good of course, but often it can be in bad, sacralized, petrified and tamed, which can frequently lead to possible conflicts.

However, God himself, whether we are thinking as Christians (Catholics, Orthodox or Protestant), Jews or Muslims, is always above our categories and personal interests and permanently elusive. As a biblical wise man Ecclesiast or Qohelet said, God is in Heaven and you are on Earth. God is truly transcendental, something different and cannot serve as a source of our own desire or a guarantee for our ambitions and our conquests. The truth is that the same god is the Creator and Father of all people and as such the source and origin of our identities, moreover because those are understood as members, and through their diversity, of the only human community. As a Creator and as a Father, God continuously calls his children to recognize themselves as brothers and sisters of the same humanity. This humanity, albeit diverse, he wants to unify in dignity and rights, built in justice and peace. As a righteous God, he is the protector of small and weak and the last resort of those who no longer can find refuge in people and their institutions.

Therefore, sure of the double perspective of God, who is at the same time infinitely close and guarantees our identities, but completely transcending them, in constant care and pursuit of a brotherly civilization, which cares for the smallest and the weakest, we open our meeting today. I would like to express my most sincere wishes that this meeting - following the vision of those who initiated it and to whom I am grateful - will allow you to freely and fully express your points of view and expectations, initiate fruitful arguments and hopefully clear some roads which will enable all to participate in explanations and easing complex and painful situations.

Welcome speech of Claudia Nolte

Director of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung in Serbia and Montenegro



Your Eminence, Your Graces, Your Excellencies, Honorable Fathers, ladies and gentlemen,

it is both an honor and pleasure to attend this unique and significant meeting at the Council of Europe. It is unique because it is the first time an inter-religious meeting is held at the Council of Europe. I think it is impressive that so many distinguished participants have gathered here.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation has been active for years in the field of inter-religious dialogue. In many countries it is accepted as an equal partner and moderator, which we consider to be a success of our long endeavor and efforts to begin a dialogue.

We support inter-religious dialogue focused on issues such as welfare, the relationship between church and state, and the political involvement of worshippers. As we bring together young people and those entrusted with responsibility, we also create long-lasting friendships based on mutual trust, which facilitates future activities. The choice of topics allows us to exchange timely experiences with people of different religious affiliations and find common solutions. The result should lead to a sense of responsibility, and provide an incentive for community involvement.

In its advisory capacity the Konrad Adenauer Foundation supports this inter-religious meeting, which is of great importance for the Western Balkans.

We think that churches and religious communities play a major role in civil society and it is therefore necessary to establish their position in society through adequate democratic instruments. Every country should find an appropriate solution, and the easiest way to achieve this goal is through dialogue.

On the other hand, co-existence of churches and religious communities in a multireligious and multicultural country, as Balkan countries are, is of great significance. The values they promote are general values of our civilization, important for every country and society, particularly for young democracies like those established in the Post-Communist period. In that sense, the experience of mature democracies, such as France or Germany is of huge importance.

We wish to give our contribution by supporting these types of meetings and contacts between churches and religious communities on the one hand, and the state on the other. I sincerely hope that this meeting will also bear fruit because every dialogue is like sowing good seed, whose “harvest” cannot bring anything bad.

I wish you good luck in “seeding” and “harvesting”.

Welcome speech of Mr. Boris Vukobrat Founder and President of Peace and Crises Management Foundation



Today, when I have this privilege to hear you and see you all together at this highly regarded meeting, I cannot allow myself to forget the words that were at one time said to me by Mr. Zimmerman, former Ambassador of United States of America in Belgrade. It was at the beginning of nineties when he said to me: *“Boris, what you and the Peace and Crises Management Foundation are doing is fantastic and I am personally aware and I know how much it is necessary for this country, but I’m afraid that we live in time of terrible people and that truly long-lasting civilization values are put on the side”*. From this temporal distance, I have to admit that he was right. Nevertheless, I believe that this period of terrible people is on its end, just as professor Pusić has said, the time of good people is coming, and if they do not do anything and don’t start acting publicly, there will be no progress.

It is my honor to greet you on behalf of the Peace and Crises Management Foundation and to say a few words.

The Foundation has all these years, since it was founded in 1992, struggled together with progressive forces of the nongovernmental as well as wider civil sector to come to a dialogue among representatives of different nations and nationalities that live in the Southeast European region. A large number of conferences, round tables and meetings is behind us and I have to admit that results are visible. Whether we are satisfied with them, is another question. It is certain that I personally am not. I know that one can always act better, more and further, especially, if we join our efforts, all of you from the region and all of us from around the world.

This is the reason why I have initiated the foundation of the Association such as CIVIS. It is the place to meet, to have dialogues about progress and improvement of mutual information in the region but also between the region and the Council of Europe, since we are the only member from the region with the seat in Belgrade. We are proud of that and today, in the Year of dialogue, we talk in concert of such a delicate topic *“Cooperation and contribution in the field inter-religious cooperation and dialogue in the region of Southeast Europe”*.

I wish this will be just one in the series of meetings, with the same topic but always with new and richer suggestions and participants, which will contribute to enrich the life of each person in the region and return to a fate on which long ago was forgotten. Precisely because of the survived war, the inobservance of and menace to basic human values, because of suffering and everything terrible that fell onto our nations lot, and as Abdul-Baha said: *“Religions should unite all hearts and make happen that from the face of earth disappear wars and separations, to contribute to the breeding of spirituality and give to each soul life and light”*.

Welcome speech of Mr. Zoran Pusić President of CIVIS association



It is my honour and great pleasure to greet you all on the eve of tomorrow's conference and Round Table that is organized by CIVIS, but, I have to say, also enabled and supported by the kindness of the European Council and Conrad Adenauer foundation and the Peace and Crises management Foundation whose president Mr. Boris Vukobrat has been a *spiritus movens* for the organisation of this conference.

The name of this Round Table conference itself "*The Contribution of the Church and the Religious Communities to the Permanent Peace in the Area of Southeastern Europe*" has left enough space for a number of possibilities to speak about, such as its contribution in the last eighteen years, the situation nowadays and what is our perception for the future; what would we like it to be and what should we do to make this wish come true?

We are all aware that "*Southeastern Europe*" is in a way nothing but a euphemism for the Balkans, because besides being a geographical part of Europe, the Balkans has become a pejorative political term with which nobody would like to identify. In recent history, throughout the number of serious conflicts that are anachronistic for Europe from the end of the 20th century, the Balkans has once again confirmed its negative political reputation.

There is a number of people who may be considered as guilty, but not every one of them equally, for the political conflicts have turned into conflicts among nations, and more over the intensified conflicts have been identified with a national or religious affiliation, or with a justification of everything because of irreconcilable differences among nations and civilisations. It is nothing unusual for Europe. Fifty years ago, some countries that were generators of conflicts for centuries still have unhealed wounds from that terrible war and have tried to change that destiny radically. What's new, indeed, is the cognition that seems to have failed. That gives all us a hope!

This Round Table, where invitees are representatives of all Churches and Religious denominations, has been organized by CIVIS which is an NGO association, a non-religious or non Church related organisation. But they are organizations who support peace, promote tolerance, help the ones being endangered and testify good intentions towards neighbours.

We believe that such values could be defined as universal law, as categorical imperative. We consider that values, for all Churches, Religious Denominations, nongovernmental associations, as a common term on which they can collaborate, disregarding existing differences but based on the same moral attitude they share.

Therefore, as it is commonly known, for evil to win, it's just enough if well-intentioned people don't do anything; but to enable good to win, we need critical mass to act towards the exemplary goal with adequate means.

In the end please let me finish with the words of A. Einstein: "*Strange is our situation here on Earth. Each of us comes for a short visit, not knowing why, yet sometimes seeming to divine purpose. But from the standpoint of daily life, however, one thing we do know: that man is here for the sake of other men - above all for those upon whose smiles and well-being our own happiness depends*".



I SESSION OF THE ROUND TABLE

ARCHBISHOP OF OHRID AND METROPOLITAN OF SKOPJE JOVAN VI (VRANIŠKOSKI)



Jovan Vraniškoski - Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skopje Jovan VI.

He was born in Bitolj on February 22nd 1966, and was baptised with the name Zoran. He graduated from the mathematic secondary school in his home town, and right after this he went to Construction faculty in Skopje. He graduated in 1990.

The same year he went to Seminary faculty in Belgrade, and graduated in 1995. As the Metropolitan of the Veleselesko-Povadarski region, he had a positive answer to Patriarch Pavle's appeal on canonic unity with the Pecka patriarchy from June 22nd 2002. After which he was illegally disposed from the metropolis rooms. He was made Exarch of Ohrid Archbishopric on September 23rd 2003. After the forming of the Saint Archpriest Synod of Ohrid Archbishopric, he was elected as Archbishop of Ohrid. Many times he was illegally persecuted and arrested by the Macedonian authorities. He is a participant in many international seminars and symposiums

Speech of Archbishop Jovan

Ohrid Archbishopric - a Church persecuted by the authorities in the Republic of Macedonia in the 21st century

The topic foreseen by the organizers of this international, interreligious gathering is “*The Contribution of Churches and Religious Communities to the Building of Lasting Peace in Southeastern Europe*”. The contribution which could be given by the churches and religious communities to the building of lasting peace in Southeastern Europe is indeed of great importance. I shall not go so far as to imply that in numerous cases the position of the church regarding certain political issues which provoke instability or war is of an even crucial importance. I

will remind myself, as well as this esteemed gathering, that certain researchers of the sociology of religion or politicologists assign imperative importance to churches and religious communities regarding both to the starting of wars, as well as to establishing peace. Even if we deny the imperative role of churches and religious communities for stability and peace, we cannot overlook that their role is of immense relevance for building peace everywhere around the world.

The time foreseen for this address does not allow us to present the historical facts regarding the aforesaid, however the wars that came to pass and the peace treaties from our very recent past, precisely in the southeastern region of Europe, are very pragmatic evidence of this. Religion and religious affiliation have vital influence in a person's life, but this influence multiplies when given people are under threat of political instability, or of war with someone. This is why churches and religious communities have a very responsible role to endeavor for justice and truth, but to support the achievement of these in a peaceful manner, not through a revolution or war. If the religious leaders are sincerely devoted to the religion they belong to, I deem they will lead their people to a road which provides peaceful resolution, because there is almost no religion, of the great and more influential, for which peace is of no relevance. However, religious leaders are just people, so, unfortunately, they fall prey to some other ideologies, sometimes completely discordant with their faith, not to even mention that they are sometimes drawn by some really base motives, too low to even mention, such as world fame, wealth or power.

In this introduction of mine I gave a very short observation of mine regarding the contribution of churches and religious communities for the building of lasting peace in Southeast Europe. If this is to be summarized in an even shorter form it would be as follows:

1. Churches and religious communities may contribute largely in the building of peace, both in Southeast Europe and in the entire world.
2. Religious leaders have the responsibility to lead their people on the paths of peace and co-existence with the members of other religions, because this is a teaching present in almost all world religions.
3. The true believers have the obligation to conform their beliefs with the religious demands for internal and external peace, which is to say, peace with ourselves and with the others.
4. In order to make possible the fulfillment of all of the aforesaid, certain social prerequisites need to be provided by the state authorities in the states of southeast Europe.

Most of the speakers at this esteemed gathering will address the explanation of the first three points. Since the circumstances in our life have brought us to personally experience the imperative requirement for a government to provide the needed conditions for churches and religious communities to give their contribution for the building of lasting peace in Southeast Europe, allow me to linger on this issue, as much as it is in my ability to shed some light on the influence of state authorities, at least as far as my country, Republic of Macedonia, is concerned, regarding the creation of necessary preconditions for operation of the Church I belong to.

On account of the lack of time I would rather not enter into a historical overview of the relationship between churches and religious communities, on one side, and the state authorities, on the other, in the time of the communist dictatorship. This issue is, more or less, familiar

to all. The state authorities in all states of Southeast Europe, represented by the communist parties, did not have a positive attitude towards the churches and religious communities. The authorities wanted to diminish the influence of churches and religious communities on the social life in such a measure that these would fall apart on account of their irrelevance. I mention this just as a reminder of the fact that in the time of communist totalitarianism the countries of Southeast Europe did not have freedom of religion or belief.

After the fall of communism not all the states under communist ideology equally changed their attitude towards faith and religion. Some completely provided for the exercise of this basic human right, the right to freedom of religious expression. Some partially did so, and some have not even tried yet. This political ambience is depicted in the countries of Southeast Europe as well. Not all of these countries equally advanced in their pursuit of democracy, which they declared to support.

Now, I shall move on to the attitude of the authorities in the Republic of Macedonia towards the Ohrid Archbishopric, the Church I belong to, because I consider this attitude to be very pinpointing and in many regards a good example of how the attitude of the state towards the Church should not be so that a church might have a political ambience to give its contribution which is rightfully expected of it.

I will speak of this very responsibly and without exaggeration because the situation, such as it is, is already very tense. We were a Metropolitan in the Macedonian Orthodox Church since 1998, when we were ordained, until June 2002 when after the summons of the Serbian Patriarch we acceded to unity with the Serbian Patriarchate. The Macedonian Orthodox Church separated from the Serbian Church, without the latter's agreement, in 1967 and that is when it was proclaimed a schismatic church and is not recognized by any other Orthodox Church. I will not linger over the topic of the unity of the Church before this gathering or over its importance for the existence of the Church, but I will dwell over certain facts from our very recent history. Immediately after our accession into canonic unity with the Serbian Orthodox Church (June 2002) the state authorities of the Republic of Macedonia swiftly reacted and after less than 5 days, the police, completely unlawfully, evicted us in the street, breaking the Criminal Code of the Republic of Macedonia, by violating the decision we had received for governance over the place of residence. This was only the beginning and we lost this process before the "independent" courts of the Republic of Macedonia. At the moment all of this is processed here in Strasbourg in the Court of Human Rights and we expect a positive resolution.

Until the end of 2003 the authorities of the Republic of Macedonia applied various coercions to try and push us back to the Macedonian Orthodox Church. Sometimes these coercions were in the shape of offered privileges, but much more often in the shape of threats. Near the end of 2003, the director of the Direction for security and counterintelligence, Mr. Zoran Verushevski himself, came to the house where I lived, in Nizhepole, near Bitola, and offered great gifts from the state if I came back to the Macedonian Orthodox Church. As we were sitting at the table I received a phone call, from his mobile phone, by the then Minister of internal affairs, Mr. Hari Kostov, so that he can confirm that the government is behind Mr. Verushevski's proposals. I refused their proposals without reflection and that same exact moment the aforesaid government representative threatened that I would regret this. It was not long after, only a couple of months and I was taken into custody for 20 days. After I was released from custody, not a full month later, masked men, with automated rifles entered the house

where I lived, and since I was absent, they cut the hair of the nuns who were there, collected only the items used for religious service and set the house on fire. It took us more than three years to renew the house and furniture. Almost four months later, in August 2004 the court sentenced me to two and a half years of imprisonment on account of “instigating national and religious hatred”. In the period when we appealed against the verdict, the Ministry for transport and connections reached a decision to demolish the only church that the Ohrid Archbishopric had built. There are at least 300 other houses and residences built without a permit in the area, since it is beyond the city limits and there is no building plan for the same, but they demolished only our church as if it was the only illegal building. In 2005 the appellate court in Skopje confirmed the prison sentence and I had to go to prison. It seems I was the only one who was sentenced for instigating national and religious hatred since the fall of communism. After an immense pressure from the international institutions and organizations concerned with the human rights and freedom, my prison sentence was shortened and I stayed in prison for eight months. Immediately after I was released from prison, the public prosecutor raised charges against me on account of embezzlement of money intended to renew a temple in Veles. Despite the fact that the money in concern had not even been touched to be spent, not to even mention embezzled or misappropriated, and it was deposited in the court, with the calculated interest, on the very first day when the court asked for it, I, being the second person convicted, received a sentence of one year in prison, and the treasurer, who was the first person convicted, received five months of imprisonment. This prison sentence was also shortened, once again after pressure from outside, and I stayed in prison for eight months, again.

In the meanwhile, all of these years, besides the fact that the emphasis of the persecution was put on me, the authorities were not shy of maltreating the other members of our Church as well. There is almost no exiting or entering the Republic of Macedonia when the police do not maltreat the bishops, priests or monastics of the Ohrid Archbishopric for several hours. During the first years it often happened that the police raided during religious service, despite having no right to do this since we officiated on private property. They often executed searches into the bishops’ and priests’ houses, rudely and with no court order. It is not even worth to mention the puny insults and cussing by the police officers against our believing people. In 2005, before the eyes of the police, people, who were obviously collaborators of the police, demolished the place where we held religious service in Skopje. After the demolition they left a writing on the wall which said “Macedonian Orthodox Church”. I shall not dwell over the fact that this awful act was staged by the Macedonian Orthodox Church, but I cannot remain silent about what happened before the eyes of the police and the police did nothing to prevent this. Instead of appeasing inter-religious tension, the authorities in the Republic of Macedonia do everything to instigate it. It was the same until the civil conflicts with the Albanians in 2001. The authorities suppressed and overlooked the demands of the Albanians, Muslims, until they took guns into their arms. It should not be expected that we will do the same. We are a Church and we know that violence breeds nothing good. Violence breeds violence and nothing else. We have decided to use patience to conquer the violence which is being executed over our Church for nearly 6 years, without a stop, but our strength is slipping away. What is done to us by the authorities in the Republic of Macedonia, in the 21st century is worse than barbarism. Not to recognize the freedom of choice as regards religion, now, in the 21st century, is much worse than leading a religious war in the pre-New Testament period. The civilization has a path of development, but where on this path is the Republic of Macedonia, which is in the heart of Europe, a candidate for Euro-Atlantic integration and signatory

of the protocol of the International Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg?

By this I wanted to give a really brief summary of all that has happened on the religious and political field in the Republic of Macedonia and which is related to the Church I belong to, the Ohrid Archbishopric. I will mention also that we filed a request for registration of the Ohrid Archbishopric to the government commission for relations with the religious communities but we were rejected, and after the rejected filed charges to the Supreme Court, we filed for proceedings before the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. On the day after tomorrow, 22nd June, it will have been 6 years since we acceded to unity with the Serbian Orthodox Church and we still have not been recognized by the authorities in the Republic of Macedonia. On 1 May, this current year, the new law on religious communities entered into effect. We filed a request for registration before the court on 26th May, this year, and the court is obliged to answer within 30 days if we are to be registered or not. In a few days time these 30 days will have passed, we still have no answer from the court, and I fear we are not going to receive it in the foreseen time frame, since for the previous decisions we waited for years.

Therefore, my questions are as follows:

- Is the overlooking of the factual existence of the Ohrid Archbishopric and its unrecognized by the state authorities in the Republic of Macedonia a contribution of this state to the building of peace in Southeast Europe?
- Are the court proceedings, maltreatments and the various types of pressure exerted over me, as an Archbishop of a Church, as well as on the other members of the Ohrid Archbishopric, by the police and the courts of the Republic of Macedonia creating an ambiance for activity of the religious communities in this country?
- Is the demolition of religious buildings of the Ohrid Archbishopric by the government authorities creating mutual trust between the members of the Church, being citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, and the governmental agencies of the same state?

I have asked only these three questions from the numerous existent ones in order to present before this esteemed gathering that what I mentioned in the very beginning is really necessary. In order for the religious communities to give any sort of contribution to the building of peace in Southeast Europe there are some necessary preconditions that need to be provided by the state authorities of this region by their respect of, at least, the basic and guaranteed religious rights of every person. With great regret, even feeling embarrassed for this, since I am a citizen of this state, with great responsibility and understanding for the political situation of the country, but in the name of justice and truth I must declare that the basic human rights are not respected in the Republic of Macedonia. It is not the right to religious affiliation, but also the human and democratic rights to political freedom, because as it was seen during the last parliamentary elections in June 2008 a civilian died and several other were wounded from excessive use of force by the police.

I would like to summarize the following from all of the above: With disrespecting the guaranteed human rights, not only the religious but also the political rights of certain minorities, the Republic of Macedonia becomes a source of instability in Southeast Europe. I wonder how in a state in which there is no rule of law, such as the Republic of Macedonia, and which by this constantly proves to be a factor of instability in the region can a persecuted Church, such as the Ohrid Archbishopric, give a contribution to the building of lasting peace in Southeast Europe?

Forgive me if you expected solutions from me, but you received a problem. We could not resolve this for full six years, so that is why we pose it before you. We even expect of someone to tell us that we exaggerate, but do not let this subject go unnoticed. We have regularly informed of these issues the representatives of the European Union and the US State Department. We regularly informed the organizations that deal with human rights issues, but besides entering this into their annual reports and besides receiving answers from the representatives of the European Union that the Republic of Macedonia cannot become a member of the European Union until it secures the respect of the religious rights of its citizens, we have the impression that no one conditions this state to change its totalitarian politics. I repeat once again, the politics that do not respect the fundamental human rights have always been and remain a source of instability in the region

BISHOP OF ZAHUMLJE, HERCEGOVINA AND PRIMORJE GRIGORIJE (DURIĆ)



Bishop of Zahumlje and Herzegovina and Primorje's Grigorije (Durić) was born on December 17th 1967. in Vares, in central Bosnia, to an Orthodox Serbian family from father Zdravko Duric and mother Savka, born Jovic. He spent his childhood in the village of Planinica, where his family used to live, originally from the village Banjani in Herzegovina near Bileca Lake. He finished primary school in Vares in 1981, and in 1984 electrical engineering high school in Vares. He entered high Seminary school in Belgrade in 1984 and finished in 1988, after which he entered Seminary faculty, just before he went to Military service in 1989 in Zagreb.

He was admitted to the Monastic Order in Ostrog Monastery on June 23rd 1992, from where he went with Episcopo Atanasije (Jevtić) to the rebuilt monastery of The Sleeping Virgin Mary, in Tvrđos, near Trebinje. He was ordained as deacon on July 17th 1992 and as monk on August 29th 1997. He graduated from Seminary faculty in 1994 and from 1995-1997 he was in post graduate studies in Athens.

On the throne of Herzegovina's eparchy, Bishop Grigorije was enthroned on October 3rd 1999 under the blessing of Patriarch Pavle, by the Metropolitan Crogorosko - Primorsko region Amfilohije. He became a spiritual leader of his people in Hercegovina and a leader of Serbian people in Herzegovina.

From the early 90's Bishop Grigorije as a monk of reestablished the church in Herzegovina, blessed it, speaking especially in front of young people, in schools, libraries, bishop's residence and in all other places. Today, he is taking an active part in public stands and culture in the Republic of Srpska and Serbia. The conversations with bishop Grigorije and his speeches are published in different magazines and books. In the edition of ZHiP Eparchy from 2004 the book *"Comes the Time and it's Already Begun"* was published in which partially his work was united.

Religious Communities as an important factor for preservation and facilitation of peace

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Reverend, assembly, ladies and gentlemen. I was thinking about asking Mr. Chairman to prompt us about time, because we are priests, diocesans so we tend to speak much. But this is a very good opportunity, so I believe we should leave room for discussion. Therefore I will shorten my presentation to less than 10 minutes, I hope successfully. Of course it is very important and difficult to speak of such an important and general topic such as this, but we will try and we will continue to speak out of personal experience because this is always the most authentic way. I must say that I come from Zahumsko-Herzegovina and the Primorje diocese, which has been divided by disintegration of the former Yugoslavia into three new states, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where it is also divided into two entities, and in Croatia and Montenegro. It initially seemed like a big wound, but today we can say that it seems to be a great privilege. If we are going in the direction of peace and some basic European standards, it may be true wealth and privilege.

Peace is one of the most commonly mentioned words even in speeches of our politicians in Southeast Europe. Mostly the endeavors of those leading among them, who take part in global events, are in connection with preserving peace in the world. They are very skilful in intervening in the interests of countries and in internal matters etc, but of course, the interests of large and small politicians are not the topic now; we have to talk like people who believe in a living God and in the church they serve in and it is clear to us that, in order to build peace in a society, meaning is in any human community, it is necessary that there are those who carry the peace and stand up so that it becomes the spirit and soul of a place or a state, or a community or religion and the world. Often, it is said for a man that he is a social being or that he is a political creature as it has already been formulated and named long ago by Aristotle. But we would say today that man is a primarily communicative creature that has the desire and will to be a creature of the community and to develop it. So community is not something that is imposed from the outside, but something that is built from the inside; the same can be said for a man, that he is a peaceful creature and that from his need to build peace in him first and then in the world. There is no peace without peace-building because peace is the reality of spiritual freedom.

In Christian tradition, a man is educated so that he always and everywhere builds peace, above all in himself and this does not mean that man should be un-reactive, but that it is peace which is the foundation of all his links and relations and all his communications, which are basically triple. Man builds a relationship with himself, with the world that surrounds him and with God. Unrest in holy literature has been experienced primarily as a consequence of man's fall and a field in which the human arch-enemy (the devil) acts, hunting in the fog. Today we live in a world where everything holy and sacerdotal is dead or tries to be dead. If this happens, and if this direction continues to be followed, then we will have a situation where there are no concrete sensitive communities; and if there are no nations and communities, there will be hordes and interest groups and we will see, more often and more increasingly, clones of the consumer mentality who built their own mythology of values and religion based on man without God and on the right of the stronger. Therefore this opportunity to speak on such an important and respected assembly as this is above all, an opportunity to present some theses, and to talk with each other. I will present only a few theories on the role of churches and religious communities

as I see them in the Balkan region.

In the Balkans, religion has a key role in the formation of modern ethnic, national and cultural identity. Bearing this in mind, as long as the abuse of religion may threaten inter-ethnic relationships, there is great responsibility of churches and religious communities to build tolerance that is necessary for promoting a normal life for people belonging to different ethnic or religious groups or communities. Cooperation between religious communities, in the field of building trust and tolerance, must not aim towards negation of certain religious, cultural or national identities, but should promote them in a positive way. We usually encounter a situation in which religious and national identity is being built in confrontation with another community. I am what they are not, or they are what I am not. In this case, this confrontation with other communities is experienced as an act of patriotism or faith that basically leads to fundamentalism, that hasn't been completely unknown in this region, in this or that form, to any religious community. Therefore, it is not only a duty but also an obligation for churches and other religious communities to actively work on establishing coexistence, peace, tolerance, respect and freedom for every man. Of course, that freedom must not be a threat to the other in his freedom. The utmost gift of God is freedom and nobody has the right to express his belief in God and his words through acts of violence, the sacrilege of other people's religious buildings and in similar ways. Religious communities can contribute a lot to affirmation of faith in God and luckily there are such examples. It is especially important that churches and religious communities distance themselves from the political ideologies of the day and their influence which are mostly in the present form formulated during the 19th century and romanticism. Failure of almost all religious communities in the area of the former SFRY to indicate on time to a danger of atheist nationalism, which was often hiding behind religious fundamentalism, is a serious warning to all that, in building future relations, we must do more to enhance trust and a minimum of agreement about what is acceptable for all communities. Such a model allows the religious communities in Europe, not only to coexist, but also to work on their religious mission in a way which will not represent an act of violence against freedom for another. Trying to replace faith in living God by humanism, or the efforts of certain enthusiasts to create an artificial fusion of different religions does not lead to affirmation of a healthy relationship with God and neighbors. According to the Christian teaching, love for every man only makes sense if we see the image of God in each person, and a virtue is a virtue not in a moralizing sense, but only if it leads to building a community with God and neighbors. And we know that Christ Himself says to us that our neighbor is just every man. Similarly sin is not just abstract moral delinquency of a heavenly legal code, but is damaging to the community of love that exists only in a free and responsible attitude toward God and neighbors.

I especially wanted to point out that serious attention should be referred toward Kosovo and Metohija, and here in this place to say that the Council of Europe, which hasn't uttered its opinion regarding the change of Kosovo's status, can contribute a lot to these processes, with its neutrality and facilitating contacts, which would not have led to political confrontation but towards cooperation and understanding. In Kosovo and Metohija, our church is trying to rebuild what has been destroyed, and to reconstruct life and coexistence in this way.

And, in the end to say one more thing about the peace that is the topic here. Religious communities are truly unique and have a connecting bond and can not and should not be factors of instability; but if they want to be true to themselves, they should be only the factors of stability, because this world does not rest, as is often heard, on the basis of market interest, nor can it lie

on physical, geographical, biological or national grounds, but primarily rests on a spiritual basis, so says our poet and theologian, mirodržni chains, chains that God the Logos has laid at the world and continually extends them with his love, since in Slavic languages, a synonym for the word “world” is peace and for the word “cosmos” is all-peace. This is our desire and the way our religion teaches us: like the word “sve-mir” (all-peace) says, peace should reign over the world.

Thank you.

BISHOP OF JEGAR PORFIRIJE (PERIĆ)



He was born on July 22nd 1961 in Bečej from his father Radivoje and his mother Radojka. During the time of baptism he was given the name Prvoslav. He finished primary school in Curug, and Zmaj Jovina Gymnasium in Novi Sad. He was admitted to the monastic order by his spiritual father, then Monk Irinej (Bulović), in the monastery of Visoki Dečani, during Toma's week in 1985. He graduated from Seminary faculty in 1986 and in the same year, on the second day of Spirits, he was ordained as a monk by. at that time bishop of Rasko Prizren's region Pavle and today's Serbian patriarch, in the monastery of Saint Three in Musustistu. After that he went for the advanced seminary studies and on postgraduate studies on the New Testament in Athens, where he stayed until 1990. Under the blessing of bishop Irinej of Backa region he is coming back to the country on September 23rd. On October 6th he leaves to Monastery of Saint Archangels in Kovilj.

He was ordained in Presbyter on November 8th /the 21st day of Saint Mihailo's Fair. Soon after, with the upcoming of many young novices, the monastery began to develop, and Bishop Porfirije became prior of the same family. Living in the Kovilje monastery he holds many seminary lectures on different stands, and especially devotes himself to being against destructive religious sects in our area; also he is a spiritual leader for many young people around the world. In the regular session of the Saint Archpriest Parliament SOC in Belgrade on May 1st/14th 1999 he was elected as Jegare's Bishop (within the Bačka eparchy).

In 2004, in Seminary faculty, at the University of Athens, he successfully wrote a dissertation defended it on the theme of *"Possibility of Cognition of God with the Apostle Pavle and according to Saint Jovan Zlatousti's interpretation."* Today he is a docent at Seminary Faculty Belgrade.

The Role of Churches and Religious Communities in Sustainable Peace Building in Southeastern Europe

I thank you. I must say that it was only two days ago that I actually came to the knowledge that I will be here among you today, so I have not even been fully versed in the topic and which direction we, here assembled, should go but regardless of that, I will try, ad hoc to utter several sentences for which I believe, will not be in the least damage to us, gathered here. Be sure that I'm joyful that I'm here, in Strasburg, for the first time in the town of Justice, where we gathered to discuss on the theme of peace; here, where people come by right, seek justice, however, the majority of us, gathered here are people who believe in God, and we know that God is the one that is just, that gives justice, that is, in fact, came into the world just to bring justice, but also we know that God is, above all, love, and that his justice truly comes through love that it is not simply that justice which is the goal in itself fact-graphic sense of word.

But love, as we know, implies the other, involves, as we have heard, the community, and community with God, the God of love and justice, and community among people. This is why it is not the miracle that the basic rule disclosed in Christ gospels, given to us by God is about love, and he explicitly says *"love your God with all your heart, all your mind and your strength, but love also your neighbor as yourself"*. Love therefore implies another, and it is not simply tolerance or tolerance in relation to the other, the other's suffering; love is much bigger than the tolerance and suffering. We can tolerate, as we know, someone, whom we do not like, or even someone whom we hate; love is the other side of the willingness to serve and sacrifice to our neighbor, which is not only, according to Gospels, someone who thinks the same as we do, but any man, because we are all created by Gods figure, all participating in the same human nature and all people are invited to learn the truth and that means apprising love. Therefore, when we talk about peace in the particular case of peace, in the manner in which we would like to speak here, peace as the absence of conflicts and misunderstandings between people who think differently, or are members of different nations and cultures, which are, in a word, in this or that way, strangers to one another, we can freely say that no one is more competent and responsible to build such a peace among men, than those who believe in the God of justice and in God of love and peace. In fact, no one can deprive of responsibility people of faith, as equal citizens of every society, for the absence of peace between us, but at the same time, no one could deprive rights to the people of faith, to, on the grounds of their values, do everything to achieve peace and fulfillment that is certainly the fruit of human that is, our effort, but at the same time, we know it, the gift of God. *"Peace I give you my"*, the Lord Himself says. Or the Apostle Paul: *"Nobody can tell another that he was not needed"*, we are all needed and therefore precious for one another. Therefore, just speaking about the necessity of understanding each other in the community of all, the Apostle Paul reminds that in the God of love there are no Greeks, nor even Jews or Skits or Barbarians and so on. There are many examples from the Gospels, which spoke about how those who are, conditionally speaking, biologically and even culturally strangers to each other, still need each other. Just to remember stories about merciful Samaritan where someone who is a stranger helps us, to us who are chosen. Samaritan who is not a member of the chosen people helps someone who is chosen.

The world's history however, the history of Europe, and the history of Southeast Europe, is full of examples that show misinterpretation of these and all other principles of the Gospels

and even more cases of abuse of religion, the Gospels and churches for achieving ground level political, nationalist goals and objectives that separate the people and exclude them from one another. When it comes to Serbia, what can be said? What churches and religious communities do to improve mutual understanding? How do they contribute to the realization of peace? What do they do and what they are supposed to do? There are, in my opinion, two aspects. One is internal, within each church and religious community, and the other is the relationship of churches and religious communities to the outside as well as mutual communication between all religious communities. Be sure that in the internal plan, the basic goal and task, which contributes to the realization of peace among men is testimony of the Gospels in relation to the members of its religion and propriety for all believers to implement of orders of Gospels in life. In other words to make the Gospels a reality of church, or reality for those who constitute the church. And exactly the principles that we have specified, the principles speak about love and about the importance of each man worth as exquisite before God. Saint Serafim Sarovski spoke *"reach your peace, and then thousands of people will find peace in you and around you"*.

Second, is the general situation in Serbia and it certainly concerns the political and social context in a broader sense of a word. As you know, churches and religious communities were the communities of the second order, in relation to the country in the former Yugoslavia and in later of first Serbia after Yugoslavia. However, since 2000, there were significant political changes and in this context as we know, in 2001, seems to me, the decision about restoring the government of religious or religious teaching in schools has been made; then in 2003 the law on radio-diffusion was adopted, and it prescient the possibility for religious communities and churches to have their media, despite the fact that the possibility of public service have the time available for testifying their values. Then came, certainly for us an important Law on churches and religious communities from 2006 and finally, also from 2006 the Law on regaining the property. All of these laws have been adopted but from adoption of laws to the implementation of that act, on which laws refer, will surely pass lot of time.

However, when we speak about peace, in such a context, seems to me that the communication that exists between the churches and religious communities is much more significant, and certainly much better than what it was until 2000, and we are still at the beginning in this sense; it is important that all churches and religious communities have appeared in relation to a country with one voice, fighting for the same rights for every church and the community individually. In addition, it is significant that between the religious leaders exists above all respect for each other, sometimes maybe just a conference that is in relation to public referred common stance by issues concerning the life of all believers in Serbia.

So, essentially it is important that between the churches and religious communities, those who are leaders, the heads of these churches exists communication, which can certainly make beneficial impact on the believers, therefore, contribute to mutual understanding. For us in this moment, as we have already heard, an important issue is Kosovo, a wound not only to Serbia and Southeast Europe, but also to the whole of Europe. And by that question, which is usually identified by syntagm of the Kosovo crisis, seems to me that the leaders, and believers not only of our local churches, but also of European Churches can also benefit and constructively influence the government and the relevant political circles of their countries and their public opinion, and also international and European institutions, so we would find the fastest departure from the current terrible situation and true and fair practice, changeable and for all saving formulas, formulas that could apply not only to the region of Kosovo and Metohija mutatis mutandis, but

also for any other area in which there is or could be similar crises.

In their desire and activities to help in the way of finding solutions that bring peace, security and justice for all people, for people in Kosovo and Metohija, or somewhere else, the churches will certainly not opt for official government positions, but for access based on obsolete, irreplaceable principles that come from the Gospels anthropology and ethics that we have tried to utter here in two words.

BISHOP OF BUDIMLJE AND NIKŠIĆ JOANIKIJE (MIĆOVIĆ)



Born on April 20th 1959, Velimilj (Banjani), Bishop of Budilje and Niksić region

He graduated from secondary school in Niksic. He graduated from Seminary faculty SOC in Belgrade in 1990 and at the same time was a graduating student from the Philosophy faculty in Belgrade. He was admitted to the monastic order in Celije Piperska Monastery on October 30th 1990. He was ordained as monk on February 17th 1991, and at the same time he was made a custodian of the Savin Monastery.

On September 1st 1992 he was made a custodian of the Cetinje Monastery, a teacher, and the head teacher in the newly rebuilt Cetinje seminary. In September 1995, he was promoted to syncellus and placed on duty as the rector of Cetinje seminary. Saint Archpriest Parliament, in regular session in May 1999, elected him as the vicar episcope of Budimlje. On June 3rd he was promoted into Episcope on Cetinje by Patriarch Pavle, with the service of Metropolitan Amfilohije and 12 more Archpriests.

On the suggestion of the Reverend Metropolitan of the Crnogorsko-Primorsko region Mr. Amfilohije, Saint Archpriest Parliament, in its regular session in May 2000, reestablished ex Zahumsko-Raska eparchy from part of the Crnogorsko Primorske diocese of the metropolitan. This eparchy grew from Svetosavske Budimlje and ex Budimlje's and Polim's eparchy.

He was a member of Saint Archpriest Synod SOC in 2004-2006.

The Responsibility of Churches and Religious Communities for the Construction of Inter-religious Harmony and Peace in Montenegro

I want to start my brief speech with the words of Christ: *“I give you my peace, not giving it to you as the world gives ...”* The Apostle St. Paul speaks of this same peace that “transcends every mind.” Peace as one of the largest spiritual values is a goal that all the traditional religions try to reach through prayer and doing good deeds. In a world filled with differences among people, among religions and cultures, peace as a spiritual value is a prerequisite of mutual understanding, respect and fulfilling God’s orders on love of neighbors, and even evangelical imperative and the love of enemies. It is indisputable, certainly, that evangelical imperative about the love of neighbors does not apply only to the love of people who belong to the same religion, but to love for all people, regardless of which religion they belong to.

The problem of evil and conflict among people of different religions, but also the internal conflict within the framework of the people of the same religion, has marked the history of mankind. I am convinced that conflicts do not arise because of differences among people, or because of differences in religions, but because of human inclinations toward sin and the inability of people to complete the orders of God’s peace and love.

For Orthodox Christians, serious work on bringing people of different cultures and devotion closer within the European Union, which in its shelter now attracts people of the area of the former Yugoslavia, is very precious. We feel that the European Union, if it wishes to overcome the narrow concept of only an economic community of pragmatic rich countries, but also to become a community of spiritual values and achievements, must remain at the same time aware of their Christian heritage. Of course, neither a state nor a political structure can release churches and religious communities of their responsibility that, in the scope of the pluralistic system, creates a way to communicate what postulates the new values of secularized civil society. For the nations that belong to the traditional dominant religions and cultures, the questions of freedom of religion and respect for its historical identity and role in society are especially important.

These two fundamental values and these two rights are promoted and protected by European legislation. We wish for all the appropriate contemporary principles of the European legislature in relation to church and religious communities to be implemented through the law on the future relationship of state and church and religious communities in Montenegro, with the respect for all the positive achievements of existing domestic legislation.

To us, Orthodox Christians, and I think, other religious believers as well, after all the bad experiences in relation with the country in the first period before World War II when we were a state church, and especially later from the time when communism systematically persecuted the church, corresponds to the principle of separated church and state with each other’s appreciation and cooperation in all matters of common interest.

It should be kept in mind that in Montenegro, relations between the State and church and religious communities are still arranged with anachronistic communist law from 1977, whose legal content makes the position of religious communities in Montenegro in a rather extent inappropriate in new conditions.

Religious education in any form is not allowed in state educational institutions. Media report-

ing about events in the life of churches and religious communities is not, in a sufficient extent, civilized and reliable. While all countries in the environment have legitimized and mostly conducted processes of restitution of unfairly expropriated property of religious communities, in Montenegro this has still not happened, and there are no serious indications that it will happen in the foreseeable future.

With the construction of political pluralism there were attempts at the manipulation of religious feelings of citizens of Montenegro, especially in hot spots and in harsh periods of ethnic confrontation and democratic elections. Thanks to distance and neutrality of the Church and religious communities have towards the carriers of different political ideas in Montenegro, they have been preserved, according to civil peace and inter-religious harmony and tolerance.

The need, however, for political neutrality, has not of course made the church become a great passive spectator of the large processes that predetermine the fate of civil society in Montenegro.

Although the Orthodox Church or any other church or religious community has no right to legislative initiative, in the process of the adoption of important legal acts, including the new Constitution of Montenegro from 2007, the Orthodox Church, in public debates on this occasion, gave quality proposals that correspond to the value systems of European law and international legal standards. Thanks to the initiatives of the Orthodox Church before the Constitutional Court of Montenegro's incrimination of the execution of church marriage before the civil one has been abolished, but also, restrictions related to access to radio diffusion frequencies, which has partially sped up democratization of the media scene in Montenegro.

The Orthodox Church (as the largest religious community in Montenegro), because of its feeling for a special responsibility for inter-religious harmony, is the initiator and organizer of many activities that contribute to closer attitudes of all religious communities in the area of Montenegro on individual issues of common interest.

It is useful to remind joint appearances in the Orthodox Church and the Islamic community of the occasion of the problems relating to social rights of priests and religious officials, rights to the restitution of property, rights to the orderly and secure legal status of religious institutions and so on...

In addition to nourishing responsibility for inter-religious harmony, the Orthodox Church seeks to contribute to the establishment of a legally regulated relationship between state and church and religious communities in Montenegro, as well as promoting European values through scientific conferences and similar forums in which the experts participating are of different religions. A scientific meeting recently held in Bar organized by the Orthodox Church and with the support and participation of the Bishops' Conference of St. Kirila and Metodija, the Islamic community of Montenegro, as well as the support of Konrad Adenauer Foundation, on the topic - the legal position of the church in Montenegro - had a phenomenal contribution to the overall understanding of that problem.

At this meeting a working declaration on the need for a legal regulation of relations between the state and church and religious communities in accordance with European legal standards in this field has been adopted. Such legislation would create the preconditions for the inner stability of the Montenegrin society, the establishment of lasting peace, cooperation and understanding between different nations and religious communities in Montenegro.

MONSGNOR STANISLAV HOČEVAR



Mons. Stanislav Hočevar was born on November 12th 1945 in the village Jelendol, in the district and municipality Skocjan by Novo Mesto, archbishopric Ljubljana, Slovenia. After finishing high school in Skocjan in 1960, he joined Don Bosko Silesian. (salezijanci). He went to secondary school in Križevci and in Rijeka, and after he joined NOVICIJAT SALEZIJANACA he went to military service in Skopje. He studied theology at Theological faculty in Ljubljana. He was ordained as priest on June 29th 1973.

He became a Master of Theology at the faculty in Ljubljana in 1979 with the theses: "*Osební greh v današnji hamartologiji*" From 1973 he was a breeder in small seminary in Zelimlje and from 1979 principal of that salezian institution.

In 1978 his book, "*Peter s Poljske*" was published, and in 1983 "*Odpri srce*", in 1988 his texts for May religious "great sign", and in 1998 he was the editor of the book "*Summers of Great Maturity*" about all killed victims from World War II in the domestic district of Skocjan by Novo Mesto. In 1999 during the bombing of Yugoslavia, he started the initiative "*Peace to You, Balkans*" and during the same year he started a successful foundation for helping families with more children called "*Anna's harmony*". For two years (1982-1984) he was a deputy of salezian provincial in Slovenia. After that, he was the principal of a high school student's boarding school - Modest Home in Celovce (Klagenfurt) in Austria. In 1988 he was elected for the first time for the provincial of salezian in Slovenia, and from 1994 until 2000 he managed the second mandate of the same service. He participated in four general capitul of salezians in Rome. For two mandates, he was the president of the conference of "*Higher Friar Chiefs of Slovenia*", and then for two years he was a general secretary of the same conference.

On the holy day of God's announcement on March 25th 2000, Pope Jovan Pavle II named him as archbishop coadjutor in Belgrade. He received the title of bishop on May 24th 2000 in the church of Maria Made of God on Rakovnik, in Ljubljana. He came to Belgrade on Holy Spirits in 2000.

During the plenary session of the Bishop's Conference of Yugoslavia in Autumn 2000, he received the duties of referent for catechist and young, for the friar life, s becomes the president of bishop's committee for Caritas. On March 31st 2001 the Holy Father Jovan Pavle II accepted the plea from the current Belgrade Achbishop Dr. Franc Perk to call him to duty, and Mons. Stanislav Hočevár took over the service of Belgrade archbishop and metropolitan. On April 16th 2001 he was elected for the president bishop conference of SR Yugoslavia where he held other functions as well.

Speech of H.E. Stanislav Hočevár

Churches and religious communities in building lasting peace in Southeastern Europe

Any authentic search for authentic peace is carrying out an act of God. Having this in mind and with joy I sincerely welcome all present. I thank the initiators, organizers and participants of this gathering for the effort they made in the service of achieving lasting peace. Permanent peace in Southeastern Europe, without a doubt, is one of the greatest values in this region and one of the most important conditions for the integral development of the entire region.

Why?

Peace, in fact, marks that beautiful harmony of man and mankind, history and universe, which can exist only as the fruit of integral cooperation of human beings - to which the constituent dimensions are transcendence - of the Creator of all existing, and that is God.

Therefore, religion - the innermost union between the Creator and the material - can only open the way to true peace.

Specifically, the Catholic Church is aware, experienced and firmly believes that "The Start" and "The End" of all, "he who carries all in his hands", meaning God, isn't just that the Being allows the harmony, but that same God who, with his embodiment created and designed history, and so he is constantly inspiring that history, establishing and strengthening peace.

1. The church, therefore, primarily its integral pastoral part, which provides the deepest formation of every living thing, wants and must form any creature that seeks the meaning of existence and thus seeks God. The formational and educational character of the Church represents, therefore, the guarantor of peace.
2. The church allows the spreading of the Word of God; and the Word of God always and again institutionalizes and constitutes individuals, their charismas and initiatives to create new historical trends. The power of the Church is precisely that which it allows no interruptions to God's initiative in history which always creates a "large part" (magnalia Dei); Church, therefore, is not primarily a museum and traditions, but the constant "initiation of a new life."
3. It is necessary to communicate with individuals, communities and nations, so that God - who jealously respects our freedom - even today, can create great deeds. The Church therefore highlights that community must be in constant metanoja , conversion: the constant efforts to take the attitude toward the past and the present, therefore, promoting permanent reconciliation. God continually "makes all new", but it must be done also by us, mankind.

And precisely that is the reason we are here.

4. With the power of God's Word, which is "the spirit" and "light", the Church, reads history and correctly interprets it, thus transforming "conflicts" into "complementaries". Only the church constituted in the "mystery of paradox" (death-resurrection) has the power to transform evil into good, hatred into love, hostility into friendship; strangers into people we know. The church, therefore, necessarily seeks freedom for its actions and calls for a new interpretation of the past - to the writing of new textbooks of history, anthropology, art... I think that is where the synergy of Church, society and state becomes important.
5. For all these reasons, the Church promotes integral humanism or social learning: complex social realities demanding a more transparent presentation of "love thy neighbor." The Catholic Church in its Compendium hints to the possibility of authentic and transparent relations in all fields.
6. I'm convinced that it is distrust that still dominates much of our region and the fear is born, and thus the constant need for "eliminating" the neighbor is the cause of non-peace. We must do everything so that in all areas there is that greater transparency, and therefore mutual trust.

Conclusion

Individuals, groups, communities, nations, churches, religious communities and religions must be in constant and open dialogue that allows the transparency of life and therefore all possible harmonizing diversity in unity. So, there will be more and beget peace.

MONSIGNOR MATO ZOVKIĆ



Mato Zovkić, was born in Croatian Catholic family in Donja Tramošnica, municipality of Gradačac in Bosnia and Herzegovina (according to Dayton Agreement, municipality of Pelagićevo in The Republic Srpska). Four grades of elementary school he finished in his birth village, six grades of religious high school he finished in Zagreb and last two in Đakovo, Croatia. Faculty of Catholic Theology he studied in Đakovo and in Zagreb where he has obtained his PhD in 1968, with dissertation about Reconstruction of the Church towards the teaching of The Second Vatican Council. From 1969 to 1972 Mr. Zovkić studied Holy Scripture at the Pope Bible Institute in Rome with final academic degree Master of Bible Disciplines.

He was ordained for the priest of Vrhbosna or Sarajevo bishop in 1963. For short period he served as a curator in Travnik and in Zenica and also for one year as a parish priest in Sarajevo. Since October 1972 Mr. Zovkić is a professor of Catholic Vrhbosna Seminary in Sarajevo where he taught Old Testament and for same time ecclesiology. In 1985 he was ordained as Sarajevo Canon and since 1987 till 2008 he has been Vicar General of Sarajevo Archdiocese. In December 1993 Pope John Paul II named him for with Prelate of the Holy Seat with honorary title “Monsignor”. Since October 1996 he is a Associate of Sarajevo Archbishop Vinko Puljić in Inter-religious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and since 2008 he is his Vicar for the relations with other religious communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Since 1969 he has been writing articles, books, and reviews. By now he has published 13 books, translated 6, and published over 130 scientific articles and over 100 reviews. In majority of books and articles he examines the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), about Church in Pluralistic Society and Gospel according to St. Luke, Paul’s Epistles and Jacob’s Epistle within New Testament. Since 1991 he is dealing intensively with inter-religious dialogue and the result is his book *Inter-religious Dialogue from the Perspective of Catholic Church in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo 1998, 304 pg.). He has participated in international and theological symposiums in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Germany, Switzerland, and Hungary. He has participated with the article about Catholic Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the occasion of war 1991-1995 in the book of P. Mojzes (ed) *Religion and War in Bosnia*, Scholars Press, Atlanta, Georgia 1998, 207-217.

Reciprocity in ecumenical and interreligious relations in Southeastern Europe

My greetings to the organizers and participants of this gathering on behalf of Cardinal Puljic, Catholic Archbishop of Sarajevo and President of the Bishop conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I have decided to talk about the subject of reciprocity in ecumenical and inter-religious relations because I find closer to me the subject of theological specialty of exegesis in the New Testament, and my specialty is inter-religious dialogue in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council and newer documents of Catholic Church tutorials. This subject relies on the ethical principle: treat others now in the way you would like them to treat you once you need their understanding and help¹. Under ecumenical relations I understand Orthodox people, Catholics and members of other Christian denominations in our countries, and under inter-religious, I imply Muslims, Jews and followers of other religions. Regarding relations of Christians towards Muslims in Europe, on this principle is based the Declaration of “*Islam in Europe Board*” which has been accepted on May 1995 by the Christian theologies of different confessions. They have worked as a KEK and CCEE Commission and they named their document: “*Christian - Muslim Reciprocity - Thoughts Dedicated to the European*”².

All of us are a minority in one place and a majority in the other

In Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina Muslims are the majority. They are not immigrants as Muslims in other European states who came there looking for a better life, but autochthon. Therefore, they are not only Muslims in Europe but European Muslims. In Bulgaria, Montenegro, Greece and Serbia, Orthodox people are the majority. In Croatia and Slovenia Catholics are the majority, but in these countries there are organized Muslim and other denominations. In all these mostly Christian or Muslim countries there are smaller Churches or denominations of reformed Christians or Jews. Unlike others to whom the language is a question of political power and influence, reformed Christians and Jews don't consider language as a means of determining ethnicity. I'm familiar with the translation of the New Testament in Bosnian which has been prepared by reformed Christians in Bosnia and Herzegovina, since among them there are Bosnians, Croatians, Serbs and “others” While Catholics read the Bible only in Croatian, and Orthodox people only in Serbian, reformed Christians can now read it in Bosnian.

In the socialist regime, us religious citizens of these states, were repressed on the edge of society since the official ideology imposed by the government, the education and upbringing system and the media, and inflicted the attitude that religion is a private conviction of the citizen and therefore a source of conflicts. Although new, some members of our parliament and public institutions represent aggressive secularism, in the plural civil society we, religious individuals and communities have a chance to present spiritual values and to contribute to the greater good. One of our tasks is to, in the places where we are a majority, bring up our own believers and countrymen to respect others and their differences. All of us mainly have general doctrinaire texts about ecumenical or inter-religious cooperation. As a Catholic I am proud of the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the tutorials created afterwards. As a Catholic

¹ Usp. M. ZOVKIĆ: “*Zlatno pravilo u kanonskim evanđeljima (Mt 7,12; Lk 6,31)*”, M. VUGDELJIJA (prir.): *Govor na gori (Mt 5-7)*, Služba Božja, Split 2004, 291-318. J. WATTLES: *The Golden Rule*, Oxford University Press, New York 1996. C. VIGNA-S. ZANARDO: *La regola d'oro come etica universale*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2005.

² Usp. moj prijevod toga dokumenta u službenom glasilu *Vrhosna* 1996., 1, 23-25.

³ Usp. E. KARIC: “*Sekularna država, civilno društvo i religijske zajednice u BIH*”, *Vrhbosnensia IX* (2005.), 1, 97-103.

⁴ A Declaration of European Muslims by Mustafa Cerić, Grand Mufti of Bosnia (24 str). Engleski tekst dobio sam od Rijasetu IZ BIH u Sarajevu putem elektronske pošte. Postoji i službeni prijevod na bosanski koji se može dobiti na elektronskoj stranici Rijaseta Islamske zajednice u BIH.

I also admire the Declaration of European Muslims made by Grand Mufti Dr. Mustafa Cerić⁴ and the Platform of the Islamic Community in B&H⁵ for the dialogue made by three theologians according to mandatory principals⁶. These are good theological texts on which we should bring up our own believers in those places where we are the majority in order to respect the rights and needs of the minority. Reciprocity as an expression of solidarity and acceptance of mutual dependence

Reciprocity as an expression of solidarity and acceptance of mutual dependence

Catholic tutors speak of the thought of reciprocity of Christians and Muslims when they talk to the believers about the need for a dialogue with non-Christians in the countries we live in. This officially started at the Second Vatican Council and still lives in the way that any bishop is invited to preach in its bishopric the idea of inter-religious dialog and cooperation⁷. Presuming as familiar the learning from Second Vatican Council on the Church attitude towards Islam, I have selected some of the quotations from the leanings of John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Joan Paul II gave his message on the Day of Peace 1983 a: *“Dialogue for peace - challenge of our time”*⁸. In it, the Pope reminds us of how the previous experience of war and violence shows that the dialog for peace is necessary and possible. For such a dialogue we need to be open minded and to accept (l’apertura e l’accoglienza), to acknowledge our diversity and specific ways, searching for all those things common to all people and searching for good with peaceful means.

In his homily on New Year 1983 he explained this message: *“Dialogue is in its nature the exchange (scambio), communication of one towards another, but above all the common search. During the war the two sides, raise one against another. The question of peace must necessarily engage the two sides. Peace can’t be built one without the other, but they all need to engage together. So there is a real sense for dialogue: he is asking all parties to work together and together (underlined by the Pope) progressing on the path of peace. It is hard to imagine how, in a unilateral way, one could solve the problem of peace in the world without the participation and concrete effort of all.”*⁹. Here is the present thought about reciprocity for recognition of dependence and needs for each other.

In the speech for diplomats who have represented their countries at the St. See 12 January 1985, John Paul II brought at the beginning his view on political facts in Europe, Africa, Asia, North and South America and Oceania¹⁰. Then he continued: “In order to have international relations work for just peace and fortifying it, we need at the same time reciprocity, solidarity, effective cooperation which is the fruit of the first two. These three keywords will be the leitmotiv of my speech. (No.3). Reciprocity can’t resist sovereignty, but it is a condition for a worthy application of sovereignty. Therefore there are no talks about peace without justice acceptance which is above parties, judging them in practice, including reciprocity:

⁴ Platforma Islamske zajednice u BiH za dijalog (7 str.). Tekst sam dobio od Mr. Ahmeta Alibašća kao jednoga od trojice redaktora 27. lipnja 2006. godine. U razgovoru s njime 29. ožujka 2007. godine doznao sam da su imami na različitim skupovima raspravljali o nacrtu teksta te se povoljno izrazili ali tekst još nije službeno usvojen.

⁵ F. TOPIĆ: “Der christlich-muslimische Dialog in Bosnien-Herzegowina”, A. M. HOLLWÖGER (Gesamtredaktion): *Identität und offener Horizont. Festschrift für Egon Kapellari*, Styria Verlag, Graz 2006, 489-509 nije imao tekst ove Platforme pri izradi svoga članka.

⁷ Usp. IVAN PAVAO II: *Pastores Gregis. Pastiri stada. Postsinodalna apostolska pobudnica o biskupu služitelju evanđelja Isusa Krista za nadu svijeta* (Dokumenti 137), Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb 2003., br. 68, str. 159-161. Teološki kontekst ove smjernice poslijesaborskog učiteljstva iz god. 2003. obradio je P. SELVADAGI: “Il Vescovo e il dialogo interreligioso”, *Lateranum* LXXI (2005), 2-3, 641-658.

⁸ “Il dialogo per la pace una sfida per il nostro tempo”, dokument objavljen 8. 12. 1982., izvorni tekst donosi svezak *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, V,3 (1982), Libreria editrice vaticana 1982, 1542-1554.

⁹ *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VI,1 (1983), 3-7, citat str. 7.

¹⁰ Talijanski tekst govora nalazi se na vatikanskoj elektronskoj stranici pod natuknicom www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1985/january/documents.

“Christians find in the Gospels the saying from the Christ Himself, which brings light, strength and sets requirements in this way of reciprocity: “Therefore, all you want people to do for you, you should do for them.” (Mt 7, 12). That adage applies to the commandment: “Love your neighbour as yourself”. There will be numerous applications of this in international life (no.3).”

With this, the Pope connects reciprocity with the positive application of the golden rules that exist in Judaism, Islam and Christianity¹¹. In Tob 4.15 that stands in a negative form: “Don’t do anything that you wouldn’t like someone to do to you”. Rabbins of Jesus’ time and the Greek - Roman writers of the New Testament time used it in a positive and negative form. Jesus’ speech on the mountain was recorded only in a positive form (Mt 7.12; Lk 6.31). The positive version seeks more charitable imagination and true solidarity with neighbours regardless of their faith, culture and nationality: towards “others” I want and need to act as I wanted them to act towards me, once I find myself in danger and in need. In this speech the Pope thus applies the concept of reciprocity to inter-religious relations:

“As far as it goes for religious freedom, one must realize reciprocity, meaning the equality of doings. Those who believe in the true God certainly can’t, due to the respect they have for the truth, allow for equality of all religions nor succumb to religious indifference. They, besides that, naturally wish for all to come to the truth they know and to advocate in the testimony that respects the freedom of acceptance, because it belongs to the human freedom and is open to a religious belief and by respecting one’s heart and mind, with grace, according to what is discovered and commanded by the well-formed conscience. They therefore can - and should - at the same time respect the dignity of others who shouldn’t stop in action according to their own conscience, especially in religious issues. The Second Vatican Council introduced this distinction in the Declaration Dignitatis humanae (no.2) solving the problem that in the past, Christian communities unfortunately, were not able to solve (no.3).”

Continuing, the Pope pays attention to the fact that European countries permit the freedom of the cult to the immigrant of the other faith, while some countries with the major population of non Christians made their religion the state religion. Similarly, he regrets the fact that some states oblige atheism as a state ideology. Then he emphasizes that practicing reciprocity reflects accepting dependence one from another:

“On top of reciprocity in the face of the rights and strict justice in equal treatment, one should reach common solidarity before the big challenges of mankind. All nations are in a situation of dependence for each other on the economic, political and cultural plan. Each country needs other countries, or will need them. God has entrusted land to all mankind, making is possible that solidarity is the law that applies to good and evil. Of course, there were various possibilities in terms of the wealth of countries or areas below the surface, climate, talents that are associated with a particular civilization, and also in human effort, depending on a greater or lesser sense of initiative. Economic and social progress can slow the difficulties that primarily effect young nations that overmaster new processes of production and distribution, and sometimes because of negligence, even for the corruption of people, and for these difficulties should courageously seek remedy. However, these situations of inequality invite people as reasonable beings to overcome the difficulties together, because there are no sustainable excuses for the cruel fate that affects a great part of humanity in refusing contributions for their survival and development. Reciprocity in solidarity is the only fully human response, and with it, properly understood interest of the long term (no.4).”

¹¹ Usp. ZORICA MAROS: “Zlatno pravilo u kršćanstvu i islamu”, B. VULETA-A. VUČKOVIĆ-I. MILANOVIĆ LITRE (ur.): *Dijalogom do mira. Zbornik radova u čast dr. Željku Mardešiću*, Franjevački institut za kulturu mira, Split 2005., 272-282.

In the final part, the Pope calls for education on moral values, which is responsibility of politicians, educational and up-bringing staffs, families, employees of the mass media, and the Church is ready to contribute their share. Among these values he includes: loyalty, fidelity for the drawn obligations, integrity, justice, tolerance, respecting life, race and other conditions of life, work and solidarity (no.7).

In mid-August 1985 John Paul II preached in six African states on the occasion of participation in the 43rd International Eucharistic Congress in Nairobi. On returning, at the invitation of the king of Morocco as a Muslim country, he held a meeting in Casablanca at a stadium which was attended by 80,000 young people¹². He spoke of the significance of faith in God and accepting God's will, about building brotherhood in the world and the spiritual richness of Islam that is recognizes and is accepted by the Church¹³. He pointed out the need of reciprocity in all areas:

"We are confident that "we can not call upon God, the Father of all, if we refuse to act as brothers towards some people, created in the image of God (NAE, 5). Therefore, we also need to respect, love and help every human being, because he is God's creature. In a certain sense, each person is God's image and representative, because it is a path that leads to God and has not fully fulfilled himself if he doesn't know God, if he does not accept Him with all his heart and if he doesn't obey Him perfectly. Furthermore, this obedience to God and love for mankind should guide us to respecting human rights. These rights are a reflection of God's will and human nature demands, in the way God has created it. Therefore, respect and dialogue seek reciprocity in all areas, particularly in area of fundamental freedoms, especially religious freedom. They serve peace and unity among all. They help in solving common problems of today's men and women, especially young people (no.5)."

Continuing, he encouraged young people to work together, since "the joint work experience helps us purify and reveal the wealth of others. So, one gradually creates the spirit of trust that enables everyone to grow, progress and "become more" (no.6).

In 1992 the Catholic Church released Catechism, containing today's synthesis of the Catholic theories of religion, liturgy, believer's morality and prayer. In the chapter "Dignity of the Human Person", among other things, discusses four key virtues (prudence, justice, strength and moderation) and about three theological virtues (faith, hope and love). About love it says: "They are fruit of love, joy, peace and charity; it requires generosity and fraternal warning; love is benevolence; it provokes reciprocity (reciprocita), remains noble and kind; it is friendship and community" (no.1829). Thus we see that the reciprocity is human and religious virtue that is expression of others we depend on and who depend on us.

The Pontifical Council for pastoral migrants was issued in the 2004 Instruction *Erga migrantes cura*¹⁴. The second part begins with a cultural and religious pluralism phenomenon that is the Catholic Church's "call to utilization of the faith in different cultures" (no.34). The intercultural interpretation of the Gospels calls attention towards people and intercession for a comprehensive growth, which "always requires a brotherhood, solidarity, helping and justice" (no.36). In the plural world, Christians should accept immigrants, assisting them in getting involved in the society of the native people, guarding their legitimate identity, "being a preacher of the true and real culture of acceptance that will know how to appreciate the true human values

¹² Usp.G. WEIGEL: *Witness to Hope. The Biography of Pope John Paul II*, Cliff Street Books, New York 1999, 498-500.

¹³ Govor objavljen u PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: *Interreligious Dialogue. The Official Teaching of the Catholic Church from the Second Vatican Council to John Paul II* (1963-2005) edited by Francesco Gioia, Books and Media, Boston 2006, 336-344.

¹⁴ Cjelovit tekst na hrvatskom: PAPINSKO VIJEĆE ZA PASTORAL SELILACA I PUTNIKA: *Uputa Erga migrantes caritas Christi. Kristova ljubav prema seliocima (Dokumenti 140)*, Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb 2005

of others, despite all difficulties life with different people brings” (no.39). Along with attention towards Catholic immigrants, especially those of the eastern rituals, the Document includes a section about the immigrants of other religions (no.50-60). He doesn't grant the regular issuing of Catholic churches and chapels for permanent prayer for the followers of other religions, but he recommends accepting immigrant children in Catholic schools on the condition that parents of such children are informed about Catholic education and its up-bringing program. Then, emphasizes:

“In the relations between Christians and members of other religions the principle of reciprocity, at the end, is of great importance. It must not be understood only as a stand of demanding its own rights, but as a relationship that is based on mutual respect and justice in the legal and religious issues. Reciprocity is also the attitude of heart and spirit that enables us to live always and everywhere with equal rights and duties. Healthy reciprocity encourages everyone to support the rights of minorities where his religious community is a majority. In relation to this we have to mention the numerous Christian movements to the countries where the majority is non-Christian and where the right to religious freedom is limited and prohibited (no.64).”

In this document, the principle of reciprocity applies to the pastoral function, having in mind the fact that members of the major religious community can and should create a spiritual and social space for immigrants who are different among their members. The document expresses regret that some majority non-Christian countries limit the rights of immigrant Christians, but that is not taken as an excuse for limiting the rights of non-Christians in the majority Christian states. Special parts of it are dedicated to Muslim immigrants (no.65-68) and inter-religious dialogue (no.69). Catholic shepherds and faithful laymen need to, through continuing education, know the religion of the present non-Christian, overcome his prejudices against them, but also avoid religious relativism.

“Dialogue among religions must not be understood only as a search for common points so that the peace could be built with the joint forces, but primarily as a foundation for re-discovery of common beliefs in all communities. Here we think of prayer, fasting, a core call of a man, openness to the mysterious, the adoration of God and solidarity among people (no.69).”

Pope Benedict XVI, during his pilgrimage in Cologne on World Youth Day, met on 20th August 2005 with representatives of the Muslims who live in Germany. He said that the intercultural and inter religious dialogue among Christian and Muslims is something that our common future largely depends on. In a meeting with officers of the Pontifical Council for pastoral migrants and travellers on 15th May 2006, who were discussing the migrations from countries with majority population of Muslims and who are moving in such countries, said that this phenomenon deserves new attention. He reminded of the Lecture *Erga migrantes caritas Christi* on 2nd May 2004 which officially adopts the principle of reciprocity. He quoted the text of number 64 that we have just mentioned. Then he gave support to a number of works of numerous religious communities that are trying to introduce immigrants, to rule out prejudices against them, and reflect trust. He continued:

“In the work of acceptance and dialogue of immigrants and travellers the Christian community has a constant stronghold in Christ, who left his students a life policy for the new commandment of love. Christian love, by its nature, emerges to meet. That's why some believers are invited to spread their hands and hearts towards each person, what ever country he came from, leaving it to the

¹⁵ Usp. Dokumenti 140, str. 66-67.

public authorities to establish laws appropriate for healthy common living. Constantly driven to the testimony of love shown to us by the Lord Jesus, Christians should open their heart especially towards children and the poor in whom Christ himself is present in a special way. Doing so, they manifest the specific symbol of Christian identity, and that is love of Christ's life and which is constantly transferred to the Church by Gospels and sacraments. Obviously, we hope that Christians who are moving to countries with a Muslim majority will come upon acceptance and respect their Christian identity.¹⁶

Here, the Pope is aware that some states with a Muslim majority don't allow the Christian migrant workers of their usual accompaniment priests, and in countries where Christians are historically present among the Muslim majority it is difficult to get a permit for the construction of new churches, opening theological schools and printing Christian books. It still may not be the reason that the authorities and public institutions in countries with a Christian majority punish Muslim immigrants by denying them permits for raising mosques and the right to religious instructions for their children.

Then, on 14 September 2006, it happened that this Pope quoted in this lecture to students and teachers in Regensburg the statement of the Byzantine emperor from the 14th century that Islam is a religion of violence. In Bosnia-Herzegovina Grand Mufti Dr. Mustafa Cerić and the Dean of the Faculty of Islamic doctrine, Dr. Enes Karić reacted in separate statements to the media pointing out the fact that the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina freely accepted Islam and are happy and feel free to practice their faith. At the same time they invited domestic Muslims because the Pope's speech did not take any violent act. The Pope's lecture and the intensive reaction of Muslim representatives in the Middle East and Europe show delicacy of the view on historical events in which violence of Christians and Muslims was motivated by religion. The Pope called on 25th September 2006, in the Castle Grandolfo, the ambassadors of countries with a mostly Muslim population, among which was the ambassador of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the speech he stated that he wishes to strengthen the ties of friendship and solidarity between St. See and Muslim countries. He quoted this part of his statement from the meeting with Muslims in Cologne. He expressed his desire that the relations between the Catholic Church and Muslims that were built by his predecessor:

"Not only continue but to develop in the spirit of sincere dialogue and respect, based on intensive mutual recognition that joyfully accepts common religious values and truly respects differences. Intercultural and inter-religious dialogue has a need for the common establishment of world peace and brotherhood, hankered by all people of good will. In this area our contemporaries expected of us to show everyone the clear testimony of the religious dimension of life. Christians and Muslims, loyal to the leanings of their own religious traditions, also need to cooperate, as they already did on many occasions, so that they would avoid any form of intolerance and opposed any violent expression. But besides that, we religious leaders and political representatives should lead them and encourage them to act that way¹⁷".

From 28 November to 1 December 2006 Pope Benedict XVI was on an apostolic trip to Turkey where he met with a small Christian group, with the representatives of the Muslim majority and with foreign diplomats in Ankara. It was a pastoral and ecumenical trip, but also the first trip of this Pope in one state with an absolute majority of Muslim inhabitants. On that occasion theologians have emphasized that in today's Turkey there is a village of Harran, from which Abraham

¹⁶ Prevodim s talijanskog izvornika, preuzetog iz elektronske stranice Sv. Stolice.

¹⁷ Prevodim s talijanskog izvornika, preuzetog iz elektronske stranice Sv. Stolice.

had to migrate due to his monotheistic faith, and he is the great spiritual father of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This journey was the new confirmation of the Catholic Church that sincerely wants to cherish an inter-religious dialogue: “Turkey, a country that officially stands as an outsider, is a bridge between Europe and Asia and embraces different religious traditions, is as a balcony in the Middle East with which we could fortify the values of inter-religious dialogue, tolerance and reciprocity of the outsider state”¹⁸. The Pope met with the diplomatic assembly in Ankara on 28th November and presented them as a friend and an apostle of peace. He pointed out that for true peace justice is required in order to correct economic misbalance and calm down the political storms that are always the reason for tension and threat to society. He praised Turkey, which was through its history, a bridge between Asia and Europe and a crossroad of cultures and religions. Then he continued:

“Dialogues should allow different religions to know and respect each other in order to cooperate for the sake of the noblest human aspiration, in search of God and happiness. On the occasion of my visit to Turkey I would like to repeat that I have the greatest respect for Muslims and I compel them to work together, in mutual respect, to promote dignity of every human being and the progress of humanity where personal freedom and care for others provide peace and tranquillity for all. In that way religion could contribute their share in responding to numerous challenges faced by our society. Certainly, the recognition of the positive role of religions within society can and should encourage us to search deeper in their cognition of people and respect for human dignity, placing the man in the center of political, economic, cultural and social activities. The world must understand that all people are connected one with another by deep solidarity, and we need to encourage them to assert their cultural and historical differences not for conflict, but for development of mutual respect”¹⁹.

By this, the current Pope explained what he considers under inter-religious dialogue and under the reciprocity in the actions of Muslims and Christians. Dialogue is not a renunciation of their own faith and cultural identity, but getting to know others who are different with preserving their own beliefs. The Pope hopes that the power of dialogues and reciprocity religious will contribute and unite communities and individuals and powerfully respond to the challenges that stand before people of plural societies that are denouncing violence in solving common and personal problems.

Conclusion

In the beginning we have found that Muslims are a majority in three states of Southeast Europe and a minority in others. On the other hand in some of these states the majority is Orthodox, and in the others Catholic. All of us are in some majority or minority. As a majority we tend to be self involved and arrogant, as a minority we need not only legal but also actual equality with the other. We can and should act in reciprocity for a common good. Therefore, theologians, religious teachers and minor and top religious leaders of the majority in a particular area should educate their own faithful for human and religious solidarity and respect the rights and needs of minorities in its ethnic and religious surroundings. This is the purpose of the Commission for Dialogue and similar structures who, through contacts with “different people” create a mentality of a dialogue and respect for them among “their own”. However modest are the fruits of the work of such a commission, they deserve, support and cooperation firstly from their own religion members, and then a democratic society.

¹⁸ PIERO MARINI: “Viaggio apostolico di Sua Santità Benedetto XVI in Turchia (28 Novembre - 1 Dicembre 2006)”, Elektronske stranice Sv. Stolice, prijevod s talijanskog izvornika.

¹⁹ Prevodim s engleskog tekst iz elektronske stranice Sv. Stolice.

MONSIGNOR GEORGE FREND0



George Frendo was born in Malta in 1946. At age 16 he joined the Dominican Order. He pursued his philosophical and theological studies in Malta, and was ordained priest in 1969. After his priestly ordination he obtained the degrees of Lector in Sacred Theology and Doctor in Canon Law at the University of St Thomas in Rome.

On his return to Malta he lectured in Dogmatic Theology at the Dominican Theological College and at the Faculty of Theology in Malta. He was elected Provincial of the Maltese Dominicans in 1989, a post he held until 1997, when he went to Albania. The following year he was appointed Vicar General of the diocese of Tirana, and in 2006 he was consecrated Auxiliary Bishop for the same diocese.

Religions and Religious Tolerance

1. Religion

Can we still speak of religion in a secularized society? In a meeting for European Dominican Provincials in 1993, in which I was present, Hervé Légrand, a French Dominican theologian, said that we must give up speaking of secularization, which he said is a very ambiguous term. Let us rather speak of social change and consequently of the need for the enculturation of religion.

Without entering into a discussion about the difference between secularization and secularism and about the different definitions attributed to either of them, I merely want to point out the way in which the process of secularism is usually defined. It is generally defined as that process by which God is gradually excluded first from public life, then from family life and finally also from personal life.

But can we state that in actual fact we are living in a world in which God, or rather belief in God, is excluded? Many contemporary sociologists of religion, like Peter Berger, Francis Fukuyama and Grace Davie, argue that this is not the case. It is true that religious practice is dwindling in many western countries, but that does not mean that contemporary man has become a non-believer. At the most we can say that this is a non-practising society, but not a non-believing society. Grace Davie, who first used the phrase “believing without belonging” to depict the religious situation of contemporary Europe, illustrates her point by referring to two events: the 11th September in New York, and the sinking of the Baltic ferry, the Estonia, off the shores of Sweden. In both cases, where did the people go? “*Straight to their churches*”. Sweden is supposedly the most secular society in Europe. Yet the Swedish people went to their churches; “*they expected them to be there, they expected the Archbishop to articulate on their behalf the meaning of that terrible event*”.¹

When, more than a decade ago, Jacques Delors spoke of the need “*to give a soul to Europe*”, and when, only two years ago Nicolas Sarkozy, then Minister of the Interior in France, in his interesting book *La République, les Religions, l’Espérance* spoke of religion as furnishing man with that spiritual hope which the State cannot give, they were both, in my opinion, expressing man’s unquenchable thirst for God and man’s basic need to enter into communion with God. No one and nothing, not even Enver Hoxha’s militant anti-theism, can eradicate man’s spiritual yearning for God. Man cannot deny God without, at the same time, denying himself. St Augustine described this yearning for God in that famous expression of his: “*You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our heart is restless, until it rests in you*”.

2. Religious Tolerance

Pope John XXIII, in his Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*, published in 1963 (shortly before his death) considered religious freedom as one of the fundamental human rights which is based on the dignity of the human person. The Vatican Council’s *Declaration on Religious Freedom* goes on to explain that this freedom means that nobody is forced to act against his convictions in

¹ Značaj verskog faktora u izgradnji jedne humane i demokratske Europe, na simpozijumu o ulozi veskih zajednica i zajednički rad za zajedničku europsku budućnost, Brisel, 12 - 13. novembar 2001. godine

religious matters in private or in public. Moreover, it states that *“this right of the human person to religious freedom must be given such recognition in the constitutional order of society as will make it a civil right”* (n.2). The Declaration also welcomed the fact that *“religious freedom has already been declared a civil right in most constitutions and has been given solemn recognition in international documents”* (n.15).

Is it still necessary to speak of religious freedom and tolerance in the post-modern and post-1989 pluralistic world? Is religious intolerance compatible with a pluralistic society? Or rather is it imaginable that in a pluralistic society religious intolerance can still be possible?

I think that since only 60 years ago (that is, until the end of World War II; and some would say even until 1960) a definition of society necessarily included a community of ideas. And this community of ideas included common religious beliefs and moral standards. Religious non-conformity was allowed only so long as it was private. This is still the case today with some countries.

But the new epoch of post-modernism brought with it what we now call “pluralism”, not only political, but also cultural, religious, etc. So long as this means tolerance in the face of political, cultural, and religious differences, that is well and good. But there are many side-effects of pluralism. I shall refer to only two of them.

First, pluralism tends to relativise moral principles and the very concept of religion itself. This eventually leads to a neutral attitude in the face of values. But this is a misunderstanding of tolerance. Tolerance and peaceful cohabitation do not mean sacrificing moral absolutes and religious beliefs.

A second side-effect of pluralism is what I consider as the great paradox or irony of pluralism: the birth of new forms of conflicts and intolerance. Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi of the Hebrew communities of the British Commonwealth, in his very interesting book *The Persistence of Faith*, makes this observation: *“Pluralism leads us to expect a growth of tolerance, while in fact it lays the ground for new forms of intolerance. By dismantling and privatising the concept of a common good, it means that no one position is forced to come to terms with the reality of any other. It is no accident that as pluralism has gained ground, there has been a sharp increase in racial tension and anti-semitism”*. And as a matter of fact, we have seen this happen in many ex-communist, but also in some western European countries, where new forms of fundamentalisms, dangerous nationalisms, and racisms and Nazism have emerged.

Can religions be sources of conflicts and intolerance? John Lennon’s popular song *Imagine* dreams of a world where there will be no religion, and this, he says, will lead to a peaceful life. As if religion is the sole or main stumbling block for a peaceful society!

The ex-Archbishop of Canterbury Dr George Carey affirmed that religion *“is often a potent binding agent for societies and cultures, part of their fundamental sense of self. And in situations where conflicts arise between communities so defined, politicians and others will often use religion as a way of justifying and even sharpening the conflict”*

And in our own times we have witnessed the truth of this statement. Just think of the conflicts in the Balkans, where religion has been instrumentalised by politicians who have given a religious physiognomy to the wars they were waging, as if these were conflicts between Muslims and Orthodox Christians, or the conflicts in Northern Ireland, where conflicts between pro-

Britain and pro-Ireland assumed the form of conflicts between Protestants and Catholics.

Prince El Hassan bin Talal was certainly right when he affirmed, in the general assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace held in Amman, Jordan, in November 1999: *"What are described as 'religious conflicts' usually have little to do with religion and even less to do with religious doctrine"*. And in a similar vein Bodo Hombach, in an address given in Budapest just one year after the conflict in Kosovo, at the time when he was Special Co-Ordinator of the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe, made this bold statement: *"Peace and reconciliation are key religious themes of our times. But we should be conscious that very recently, and not at all far from here, cynical and greedy people instrumentalised religion to help fan the flames of conflict to achieve their brutal - usually in some form, economic - ends"*.

Religions have an educative role. They educate their followers to respect the irreplaceable dignity and rights of the human person. A prophetic voice in sixteenth century Spain, the Dominican Francesco de Vitoria, in his celebrated book *De Indis* and in his *Declaration on Human Rights* emphatically stated that no Emperor or Pope has the right to wage a war or to invade a country with the scope of Christianizing that country; nor can anybody be obliged to embrace any religion against his will and convictions.

Religions are for peace, because religions are expressions of belief in and communion with God, creator of all mankind. And this lays the basis for true brotherhood and genuine peace. If in certain circumstances it would seem that this is not true, then we must admit that there is a misconception or instrumentalization of religion and of God himself. No war can ever be waged in the name of God.

3. Beyond Tolerance

Albania has always boasted of its tradition of peaceful inter-religious coexistence, and rightly so. Prior to his visit to Albania, on the 25th April 1993, Pope John Paul II said: *"I earnestly desire that this visit will serve to strengthen the traditional bonds of fraternal cohabitation which have characterized the relations among the different religions in your country."* And the former President of the Republic, Alfred Moisiu, in his address to Albanian Ambassadors serving in different countries, on the 30th August 2002 made this comment: *"We cannot ignore the existence of different religions in our country, rather we appreciate their role for the creation of an atmosphere of tolerance in our society. Albania can boast of the harmonious co-existence among religious communities. A fundamental characteristic of Albanian civilization is its religious tolerance, and this leaves no room for fundamentalists of any religion whatsoever."*

One might ask, what is the reason for this tradition of peaceful inter-religious cohabitation in Albania? Quite often Albanians themselves answer this question by referring to a renowned Albanian author, Pashko Vasa, who said that the religion of the Albanians is "Albanianism": religion, they say, is secondary to Albanians, so long as there is their national identity that unites them. Personally I do not agree with such a statement. In my opinion, Albania can boast of its peaceful inter-religious cohabitation because in its political history there has been no "Ayatollah Khomeini" or "Slobodan Millosevic" who made use of religion for political aims.

But to what extent are we giving witness of a peaceful co-existence that goes beyond mere tolerance? Tolerance is the bare minimum required for a peaceful coexistence. I'm ok, you're ok; I mind my own business, and you mind yours. But religion demands more than that. It is not enough just to have a drink together with the Orthodox, Muslims, and Bektashians on the oc-

casion of Easter or Bajram.

I here refer to a Russian Orthodox theologian, Olivier Clément, who coined the phrase *prophetic partnership*². In other words, we must make a common effort to discover the common prophetic role of our religions.

And here we need to stress the importance of an inter-religious dialogue, And by “dialogue” I do not mean a road to relativism, ideological or doctrinal compromise, or syncretism, nor just finding a way towards a passive acceptance of our “being different”, a *modus vivendi*, nor even just a peaceful co-existence. As Joseph Ellul has duly observed: “*Inter-religious dialogue is based on mutual respect, but also upon sincerity and frankness, Its role is not that of suppressing differences, but at looking at them as a means for creating mutual understanding, respect and enrichment. It implies maintaining one’s religious identity while respecting that of the other, it demands listening as well as speaking. It is an ongoing challenge to deepen one’s own faith while appreciating that of the other*”.

Discovering our common prophetic role demands, first of all, an act of faith in the one true and living God who is love; an act of faith in our common dignity as human beings created by God in his own image; and an act of faith in our common vocation to know God, to love him and to know he loves us and so to enter into communion with him and listen to him. In his message for the World Day of Peace, 1st January 2002, Pope John Paul II emphasized the specific responsibility of religious leaders, whether Christian or non-Christian. He said that they must collaborate to eradicate the social and cultural causes of terrorism as they teach the dignity of the human person and to jointly engage themselves in the promotion of peace.

I would like to conclude this talk by quoting from the final message of the Inter-religious Assembly held in Vatican City in October 1999: “*We appeal to religious leaders to promote the spirit of dialogue within their respective communities and to be ready to engage in dialogue themselves with civil society at all levels. We appeal to all the leaders of the world, whatever their field of influence, to refuse to allow religion to be used to incite hatred and violence; to refuse to allow religion to be used to justify discrimination; to respect the role of religion in society at international, national and local levels; to eradicate poverty and strive for social and economic justice*”.

I think that these words provide us with an excellent programme for further inter-religious dialogue and collaboration!

² *Witnessing in a Secularized Society*, in: George Lemopoulos (Ed.), *Your Will be Done: Orthodoxy in Mission*, WCC, Geneva 1989, p. 112.

H.E. ADEM EF. ZILKIĆ



Adem ef. Zilkić was born in 1956 in the village of Orashe, nearby the town of Tutin, where he finished his elementary school. The high theological school, madrasah, he finished in Pristine as well as the faculty of Philosophy, Oriental Department. After military service, he returned to Tutin where he became imam on 11 November 1981, and since 1985 he has been the main imam of medjlis (municipality board of Islamic community).

He has written nine books, mostly with religious themes, as follows: "Ilmihal for the 1st Degree", "Tutorial for Mekbet classes for II, III and IV Degrees", "Allah's prophets", "Namaz (Why and How you Cringe)", "Islamic Splendors", "Instructions on Faith", "Islamic Community in Time and Space", "National identity of Bosnian Muslims in Sandžak" and "Dictionary of Oriental Words in Bosnian Language" which is in preparation for publication. Zilkić, after the break-up of Yugoslavia, and with it the Islamic community in the Center in Sarajevo, was president of the Innovative Committee for the formation of the Mesihata Islamic Community of Sandžak.

He was one of the candidates for the first Sandžak Mufti, but he suggested that it should be Zukorlić. He was the initiator of the initiative for establishing the Muslim cultural society "Preporod" (and was its first president), then he was the president of the humanitarian society "Merhamet", and the Bosnian library "Vehbia Hodzić" in Tutin. Adem ef. Zilkić, during his 26-years of service in Meldyisa Tutin, he built, with his fellow citizens, 42 mosques and the administration building of the Medzlisia committee.

There is also a business-residential centre being built in the center of Tutin and the foundations for the medresa have been built. Also, this committee has managed to recover all confiscated vakuf property. It is good to mention that Adem ef. Zilkić, as the main imam, has had the best organized mekbet classes in Sandzak, and further. Mekbet classes were passed by 4876 students.

Ef. Zilkić is the author of the unified plan and program of mektebska classes in the area Mesihata Islamic Community of Sandžak, and that in mekteb his text books are mainly used. Reisu-I-Ulema lives in a modest family home in Tutin. He is married and has five children, four daughters, with faculty diplomas, and one son (medresa student).

The contribution of the Church and Religious dominations to the permanent peace in the area of Southeast Europe

Today, humans are under terrible pressure of particular self observing and understanding of one's surroundings. There is real danger of losing the whole picture of the unity of this world, of the real connection of each reality in the spiritual harmony of everything created, by repressing God's cognition, that bring the life from its own treasury. Therefore attempts of the few enthusiasts that are trying to save the world which is sinking into its own hopelessness seem useless to us. Different worlds are disappearing, different people, animals, cultures, residence under the eyes of everyone, with no man responsible.

Present man in general, should know that these kinds of tendencies might lead to the negation of the world they are living in.

The nation/state, as the most powerful authority, at the same time imposes the ultimate criteria for all values. Placing itself beyond everything executes its plan in two directions. It strives to repress supreme authority of religion, replacing it with responsibility of its own authority. On the second plan it strives to make relative all the spiritual values through their consumer intention for their quasi cultural purposes.

God has given life to this part of the planet to all religious adherents. They can live either in the state of war towards everyone or in the state of prosperity peace. In both cases, Islam and Christianity (in Catholic or Orthodox variety), and Judaism will take the crucial role.

Previous history of the joint life of different religious denominations has so far shown us some different examples, but we, the people of faith, are obliged to use human potentials of our religions to avoid a horrible period of killings and persecution in the area of the Balkans in the future. This area, with no doubts, has a great soul but at the same it is burning with the flame of hate and primitive comprehension of religion and living with faith.

If religions are still an important factor in this society, then their responsibility is much greater, because responsibility depends on the level of the power and influence of a certain factor. I am hardly responsible for happenings in Afghanistan, without having any power to act but I am far more responsible for the things happening in Serbia and even more for the things that are happening in the Islamic community.

However, what are the possibilities of the religions that are present in this area to contribute to the solution of the conflicts, to prevent eruption of new ones and to create mutual respect and positive living? Considering the fact that religions still have great influence on this society, their contribution could be of a great importance. Religions are completely aware of their responsibilities. That at least comes from representatives of Church and religious denominations, during the meetings held in the period of conflicts. Now, when that time of conflict is behind us, we are obliged to show everyone, in a more concrete way, what are that possibilities and what kind of initiative could actually be taken.

Churches and other religious denominations are developing different functions. First of all I would like to emphasize the three most important ones: upbringing and education of our youth during the school process, religious and moral upbringing of our believers through worship

and media relations, considering the fact that all our churches and religious dominations are present in the media.

There are a number of possibilities for theological education, through the teacher/student exchange, as well as through different kind of meetings, symposiums, congress and other ways of cooperation organized by different organisations.

The second important fact is: We are all monotheists; we all fall under so called religion of the book. Qur'an says: *"Followers of the Book, come and join around the word which is common to all of us: do not pray to anyone but God, do not consider anyone to be equal to Him..."*

We all believe in one God, the Creator. We are all his children; we all have the same humans' dignity. "We have created humans dignified" and we will all be judged one day by Him by the way we have fulfilled his will, but before all by the way we have treated other people.

For all monotheist religions, the most important is that that we see in every human the culmination of everything created, to see the human as a subject of indisputable dignity, which is a reason why each individual has his/her dignity in every situation.

The second fact, of great importance for our community, is the idea of human religious freedom and freedom of the conscientious. This, at the bottom line, instigates all religious denominations to ask from all their members to respect members of other religions or Churches as well as the members of all nations. Dear God says: *"There is no compulsion in faith"* and ... *"Are you going to enforce people to be faithful"*. People must not be forbidden to change their beliefs. More or less we are all living in a plural society and under globalization that pluralism will be more and more intensified. There are no closed nations in Europe anymore. We could not prevent this world and this area, to be an area of open competition in the aspect of religion and ideas.

I would like to emphasize just one more fact and one more mission for the Churches and Religious denominations and afterwards to the whole society, that is release from the past. The very special characteristic of Christianity and Islam is that they are historical religions. Jesus Christ - Isa and Mohamed are historical persons and they have been present in the wide religious history. In these religions, historical sermon and historical memory are of great importance: our preaching is narration of a history. Therefore, our religious identity is in union with that memory. Being Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim or Jew - means to feel as inheritor of all previous generations, to feel like them and to be determined to keep up the way of faith being shown by ones before, but first off all by Founders.

This isn't valid only for our religious identity, but also for our national identity. The Mighty said: *"I have made nations and tribes so that you could get to know each other better..."*

For historical consciousness and memory we are self responsible. For that matter the four great commitments must be obeyed.

The first one, release from the past, ordain us to revise the wholly truth on our history. Taking into consideration the fact that history is of the crucial importance for national consciousness, it is inevitably under the great pressure of national and nationalistic ideology. Ideology is present in those places where the crucial role is lead by practical not theoretical interest: the interest for benefit not for the truth. That is a mission firstly for all public utilities that are examining historical science, but also for our theological utilities - to maintain contacts and scientist and theological meetings in order to provide mutual and true understanding and respect within

instead of creating prejudices.

The second mission is justice, meaning that all injustices committed in the past should be corrected as much as possible. That is the main task of our Courts. The meaning of conviction and punishment is not revenge. If the final goal is revenge, all of us should be against punishment, but the point is in recreating norms and criteria of the social justice.

The third mission is forgiveness. It is not impossible to correct every injustice, especially the ones which have been committed in the ancient past. Constant reminding and recollecting the memories on injustices from the past, creates the feeling of frustration and bring us back to the past. In order to build a better future with the truth being well known, we have to learn to forgive and to ask for forgiveness. This is a mission of our communities; the duty of forgiveness is one of the biggest missions in the heaven. We can even say that the ability of forgiveness makes us true believers.

The fourth mission is the call for unity of mankind and that the best in the eyes of God is the one that is the most valuable to all humanity - as Mohamed says, God had mercy on him and saved him: *"All men are God's creatures and He prefers those who are useful to all men"*.

I am convinced, based on European historical experience, that religion which shown itself as a main factor of reconciliations, joint living, and mutual respect in the area of South-Eastern Europe, might have the biggest chance in a modern profane society and will raise the biggest interest within the generations yet to come.

If we all agree that these principles are proclaimed and canonized by all heavenly religions, and if we emphasize that these rights and obligations rise from the faith in God and His learning, as the fundamental base for dignity and decent life, if we agree that these main beliefs open the doors of human knowledge into different branches and disciplines of life and technology crucial for the human existence, it isn't simple and easy to believe that all sons are the sons of Adam and that Adam is created from the Earth. Is it that difficult to accept that that all people are equal in the eyes of God? Is it really necessary to explain that killing one man is the same as killing the whole of mankind?

Is there really anybody to whom it is difficult to understand that the right for living, in this world, to breath this air is for all nations, either they are 350-400 thousand or 3-5 or 10 million.

All the people are the people of God and all the priests are God's shepherds. They must be responsible and they should not close the eyes in front of tragedy of their herd. On the contrary, they must, even for the price of their lives, always and at every place promote the principles of God which are:

- a. Principe from the Qur'an when He spoke to the humanity preaching the God's call to mankind with the following words: *"O people! I have created you from one man and one woman and made nations out of you so that you could get to know each other better, and the best one among you is the one who fears from God most"*. This divine command, invites people to act, to recognize among themselves those who wish peace and order, love and justice, who are in line with a greater good, leading towards common happiness and well - being, apropos to reveal with it's differences those who lead to death and destruction by their hate, riots, injustice and tyranny.
- b. Principe by which Mohamed concluded his call and his life on the largest gathering, on the

parting Hajj, when he said: *"There is no privilege for Arabian over non Arabian, or white over black except in pious"*.

- c. Principle which has been recommended, on the same gathering, by the Messenger calling for peace which represents one of the conditions for believing in God, warning about the crime of blood spilling, which is, again, an offence to God. He said: *"Do not be back, after me, in the unfaithfulness, attacking one another"*. In this way, confirming Allah rule, Qur'an says: *"O you faithful join on the side of peace!"*

True, therefore, integral peace is the widest anthropological and sociological category, since it is implying the possibility of normal human existence and their society in general, and therefore in this community especially freedom, culture, work and production, science and technology, philosophy and religion, progress and prosperity.

Biological presumptions of peace are: Earth, water, air and energy, while humane are: peace, sense and freedom, work and creation, human understanding and comprehension.

As it is for us, we will start from the basic of Qur'an saying: *"We believe in what is said to us and what is said to you, since our God is your God as well - the one we all respect"*. *"O followers of the other books, let's unite in praising no one but God"* and stand up to the principles that there shouldn't be diversity in the basis of the heavenly religion, which are regarding:

- men's respect towards God,
- all humans necessity for peace and life without violence and hostility,
- which are regarding:
- the work and prosperity of the mankind in the aspect of science, economics and social security
- all solutions provided in the interest of mankind that will ensure safety
- forbidding the immorality that makes life difficult and violates safety
- positive initiatives according to instructions given by Muslims believers that are saying: *"I have been invited in pre-Islamic time to fight against aggression and to help the weak, now when the time of Islam has come I would certainly respond on that call"*

Dear God invites us all to communicate one with another. As a natural mean of basic human communication one may consider agreement on questions of life, work and acting, considering the fact that agreement is the most natural, the most appropriate and the shortest way to the success, standing opposite to the search for one solution which is necessary to each individual and to all mankind. Nevertheless, communication could be successful or less successful or people, sometimes speaking the same language, can't accommodate. For successful communication not only the idea or the content of the conversation are relevant, not only language, or communication code they use, but also a form of shaping the note, ways of it's transmission, all the way to the communicator to whom the message is dedicated.

Dear god says: *"Kind word is like a nice tree: Its root is firm in the ground, and its branches are towards the sky"*.

Kind words could accomplish:

- establishing normal and proper relations,
- establishing productive and firm relations which may be very helpful
- creating creative cooperation between individuals

- rising the spirit of love, consideration and tolerance
- people's acceptance of each other and
- fulfilling desired influence on each other.

However, crying the tears on one's national destiny, and building a future on the tears of other nations isn't a road that leads to trust and understanding. To take a lot and give others a little isn't righteousness. To consider yourself a great man and others besides you trivial isn't a concept of equality and tolerance. The right to live, to be happy and to a future is God's principle which should be preached by all religious people.

Individual happiness and well-being are unacceptable in Islam if they aren't in line with common right and happiness. An individual struggle against evil is not enough if we do not unite and struggle together.

By liberating a man completely from magical, mythological, animistic, national and cultural traditions and frames, and then from profane control of his mind and words, we will be able, at least partly, to do our mission as God's protector on Earth, mission of peace, order and harmony.

Differences in the approach when conducting this mission are evident, but they shouldn't be a priority. Concepts of tolerance guide us in order to make us come together in our resemblance and respect and honor our diversity.

I would like to conclude with the words of the Lord of humans and all living being and of all worlds: *"Don't let hate you feel towards certain people lead you to attacking them or affecting your hostility towards them. Help one another in charity, love and nobility, and try not to be involved in cruelty, sin and hostility."*

My kindest regards to you all and May God be with you!



II SESSION OF THE ROUND TABLE

II SESSION MODERATOR PROF. DR DARKO TANASKOVIĆ



Dr. Tanasković is the professor on the chair for oriental sciences on the Philological faculty, University of Belgrade. He was born on January 4th 1948 in Zagreb. He has finished classical gymnasium in Belgrade, graduated oriental philology, master and become doctor of science with the dissertation “*Arabian language in modern Tunis - diglosia and bilingual*”, on the same faculty. As a docent, associate professor and from 1988 regular professor on this chair, he teaches several subjects (Arabian language, Turkish language, Introduction to oriental philology, Persian literature, basics of Islam civilization, and on postgraduate studies he teaches Introduction and parallel grammar of semit languages and Arabic linguistic. He published more than 600 science and expertise works from oriental sciences, among which are the books: “*Arabian poetry*”, “*Sufizam*”, “*Arabian language in modern Tunis*”, “*Constantine analyze Arabian and Serbo Croatian language*”, “*In dialogue with Islam*”, “*Turkish-Serbina dictionary*”.

Darko Tanaskovic has taught on the university in Sarajevo and Skopje, as well as on the High School for social science (*Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales - EHESS*) in Paris. From 1990, he is a member of Executive committee European Arabian university in Rome (*Univeriste Euro-Arabe Itinérant*) and in 1995 he ws elected for the European academic of science and art (*Academia Scientiarum Et Artium Europea - Salcburg*). He is an associate of Belgrade Open School BOS, and Institute for geopolitical studies (Belgrade). He is a professor per call in ECPD University UN in Belgrade. From 1995 until 1999 he was on a duty of ambassador of SRJ in Turkey and in Azerbaijan. In March 2001 he was named a member of Yugoslavian committee for truth and reconciliation. From 2002 until 2008 Darko Tanaskovic was on the duty of ambassador within Holy Chair in Vatican and within Maltese knight order. On October 2004, Pope Jovan Pavle II decorated him with an order of great Cross of Pia IX order, and great Master of Maltese knights with order of great Cross of the order for military services. .

He speaks French, English. Arabian, Turkish, Italian and Russian, and he knows Latin and Ancient Greek.

REVEREND RICHARD FIRCHER



Executive Secretary of the Church and Society Commission of Conference of European Churches (CEC) - responsible of its Strasbourg Office, France. Delegate of the CEC. Secretary of CEC Working Group on Bioethics and Biotechnology during the last 12 years preparing CEC's reflection and position paper for the European institutions and for its members churches.

Speech of Reverend Richard Fircher

Churches and religious communities have an important role in sustainable peace building in general and in Southeast Europe in particular

In 1989, before the war started in South East Europe, CEC and the CCEE (Council of Bishops Conferences in Europe) held their first European Ecumenical Assembly in Basel with the theme ***“Peace and Justice for the Whole of Creation”***. The Final Document adopted there states in §61: *“we vigorously affirm that non-violent means are the best way to achieve change in Europe. In our countries and in our continent, there is no situation that demands or justifies the use of violence.”* This starting point was made by the most comprehensive and representative Christian gathering in Europe.

In 1997, the second European Ecumenical Assembly was held by CEC and CCEE in Graz with the theme ***“Reconciliation - Gift of God and Source of New Life”***. About 10 000 Christians from the whole continent came together. The adopted message states: *“we came to Graz, men and women of all generations from the many churches in Europe, from East and West from North and South. Among us were also representatives of other religions and from other parts of the world. As Christians in churches which are still divided, we experience the fears, tensions, problems and barriers as fellow-Europeans, indeed as do all human beings. But in our hearts there was the strong hope of taking steps on the road towards reconciliation. This hope was strengthened by the presence and contribution of so many young people.”*

In 2001, the “*Charta Oecumenica - Guidelines for the growing Cooperation among the Churches in Europe*”¹ was signed in Strasbourg by CEC and CCEE and sent to all member churches. In the section called “Participating in the building of Europe”, it states:

“The churches support an integration of the European continent. Without common values, unity cannot endure. We are convinced that the spiritual heritage of Christianity constitutes an empowering source of inspiration and enrichment for Europe. On the basis of our Christian faith, we work towards a humane, socially conscious Europe, in which human rights and the basic values of peace, justice, freedom, tolerance, participation and solidarity prevail.”(...)

“We commit ourselves :

- to seek agreement with one another on the substance and goals of our social responsibility and to represent in concert, as far as possible, the concerns and visions of the churches vis-à-vis the secular European institutions;*
- to defend basic values against infringements of any kind;*
- to resist any attempt to misuse religion and the church for ethnic or nationalist purposes.”*

In the section “**Reconciling peoples and cultures**”, the Charta says:

“We consider the diversity of our regional national, cultural and religious traditions to be enriching for Europe. In view of numerous conflicts, the churches are called upon to serve together the cause of reconciliation among peoples and cultures. We know that peace among the churches is also an important prerequisite for this.

Our common endeavours are devoted to evaluating, and helping to resolve, political and social issues in the spirit of the Gospel. Because we value the person and dignity of every individual as made in the image of God, we defend the absolutely equal value of all human beings.

As churches we intend to join forces in promoting the process of democratisation in Europe. We commit ourselves to work for structures of peace, based on the non-violent resolution of conflicts. We condemn any form of violence against the human person, particularly against women and children.

Reconciliation involves promoting social justice within and among all peoples; above all, this means closing the gap between rich and poor and overcoming unemployment. Together we will do our part towards giving migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers a humane reception in Europe.

We commit ourselves:

- to counteract any form of nationalism which leads to the oppression of other peoples and national minorities;*
- to strengthen the position and equal rights of women in all areas of life, and to foster partnership in church and society between women and men.”*

There is a Section entitled “**Strengthening community with Judaism**” which says:

“We commit ourselves:

- to oppose all forms of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism in the church and in society;*
- to seek and intensify dialogue with our Jewish sisters and brothers at all levels.”*

¹ www.cec-kek.org

Another Section is called “Cultivating relations with Islam” stating:

“We commit ourselves:

- *to conduct ourselves towards Muslims with respect;*
- *to work together with Muslims on matters of common concern.”*

The last Section is on “**Encountering other religions and world views**” recognising that “the plurality of religious and non-confessional beliefs and ways of life has become a feature of European culture.

“We commit ourselves:

- *to recognise the freedom of religion and conscience of these individuals and communities and to defend their right to practise their faith or convictions, whether singly or in groups, privately or publicly, in the context of rights applicable to all;*
- *to be open to dialogue with all persons of good will, to pursue with them matters of common concern, and to bring a witness of our Christian faith to them.”*

In 2003, the theme of the 12th CEC Assembly in Trondheim was “**Jesus-Christ Heals and Reconciles - Our Witness in Europe**”. It adopted a Report on Public Issues stating :

“Participants in the 12th Assembly of the Conference of European Churches express their deep concern about the sufferings of Serbian and other ethnic communities in Kosovo, as well as the destruction and desecration of churches, monasteries, cemeteries and other objects of historical and cultural heritage.

Previously, CEC has condemned violence in the Balkans against women, men and children of different ethnic backgrounds, as well as acts of vandalism directed at churches, mosques, other houses of worship and educational institutions.

As churches, we remain committed to promoting reconciliation and healing between the ethnic communities in Kosovo. We urge the international authorities and peacekeeping forces to guarantee the security of all ethnic communities in Kosovo and the preservation of its ancient culture. We call for prayers for lasting peace in this region which can be based only on justice, human dignity and equal opportunities for all ethnic communities.”

I conclude this first part with five remarks:

- There is a strong coherence in the churches’ witness to sustainable peace building in general, and in Southeast Europe in particular.
- Churches and religious communities have the advantage of their long-term witness compared with political forces.
- Religion is part of people’s identity. It must not be misused for political purposes.
- Churches and religious communities are very close to people, even in small villages, and at the same time actively present on the European and world level.
- Religion was the only real functioning institution in society at one stage in Southeast Europe, as has happened before in European history.

CEC was and is involved in Southeast Europe

With the background presented in the first part, CEC was and is involved in Southeast Europe, in partnership with the World Council of Churches, the CCEE, the European Council of Religious Leaders, and in contact with the World Conference for Religion and Peace.

The involvement of CEC is guided by three principles:

- The churches and religious communities have to give witness to peace together. Concrete examples are given by the many round tables organised by CEC and CCEE with all religions present in the region, making sure religious communities remain in dialogue during war when political forces are violently opposed, asking for non-violent solutions, and not portraying the other as an enemy.
- Church and religious community leaders have an important role, but the interreligious dialogue must not remain only on the level of religious leaders, because there is a need for inter-religious dialogue as well, within each religious community. I want to give the example of the Southeast European Ecumenical Project (SEEEP) where CEC was responsible for the training in mediation and in non-violent methods of conflict resolution with participants from all religions. We went onto the level of those who play an important facilitating role within their communities and organisations. We also tried to involve theological faculties and institutes with this key question which is a theological challenge: *“what is the role and position of the other in the theology and life of my community?”* It is a key question because there is no real way to sustainable peace as long as we cannot properly address the future way of living together. Who is the other: an object of my mission? An enemy? How do we deal with a person of another faith or conviction in my own faith or conviction?
- We have always used a regional approach, not a country by country one, because we believe the solution can only be achieved through a regional approach.

I finish by saying that we hope that the political level has also a regional approach. It must remain as an aim for the European Union to offer to all countries of Southeast Europe a perspective for full accession to the EU.

ARCHPRIEST ANTON ILIN



Theologian - Moscow Orthodox Spiritual Seminary and Academy, Ph.D in Theology

Medical Doctor - Moscow Medical Academy. Graduated in 1998, Medical degree

Professional Experience and current responsibilities

European Representative of the RUSSKIY MIR FOUNDATION (present); Founder and executive secretary of the European Russian Forum (civil society initiative to promote non-governmental dialogue between EU and Russia); Member of the Worldwide Coordinating Council of the Russian Compatriots (related to the governmental commission for Russian compatriots living abroad)

Created the rank of Archpriest

Founder and Elected Vice-president of the EU Russian-speakers' Alliance (international NGO, created to promote political participation of Russian-speakers in EU countries); Executive secretary of the Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church to European international organizations (responsible mainly for the European commission, the European Parliament, NATO, NGO's representations based in Brussels)

The Dean of the Russian Orthodox St.Nicolas Cathedral (Belgian Diocese, Moscow Patriarchate) Secretary (head of unit) for Church and Society relations of the External relations department of the Moscow Patriarchate; Staff-member of the External relations department of the Moscow Patriarchate; Member of the Synodal working group for the preparation of the Orthodox Social Doctrine's Basic; Parish deacon and priest (Church of the Nativity of Christ, Izmaylovo); Priest's ordination (by His Holiness Patriarch Alexiy); Deacon's ordination (by His Holiness Patriarch Alexiy).

Speech of Archpriest Anton Ilin

Dear Chairman,

Thank you very much, first of all for this invitation. On behalf of His Eminence Metropolitan Kirill, Chief of the External Relations department of the Moscow Patriarchate I would like to wish you great success for your CIVIS project because, as already mentioned, the regional level is quite important today in Europe. Both the supranational level and the regional level are growing in importance, whilst that of the national state is being called into question to a certain extent at the moment, so I'm sure that this initiative will be successful. I just want to come back to some issues already mentioned by previous speakers.

For example we discussed the separation between church and state and their positions towards each other. Of course this separation is one of the cornerstones of modern European society, together with the rule of law, human rights and democracy. It is a normal secular approach which is acceptable for all actors. But we should be clear that churches and religious communities should be separated from the state if we understand that state means *governance*. But not separated from public life as such, that's quite different. Of course churches and religious communities today are completely separated from governance in any European state. But if, on the other hand, one holds that churches should be separated from and kept away from any public activity, this is a completely different approach. Not a secular approach but a *secularistic* one. That's one more *-ism*. Looking at the past we should recognize that the secularistic approach has long existed but has always been historically and geographically limited to a relatively small number of European countries. This approach isn't universal anyway. So, as I've already mentioned, churches should not be separated from public life. Even when churches and religious communities enjoy a prominent position in public life in some countries that also is not a problem. What about the involvement of the churches in politics? Maybe we can say that churches are involved in politics, but that indirectly being involved in public activity is an important and maybe sometimes integral part of belonging to an organized civil society. And that's the reality for some European countries. Non-governmental actors are important in any state which provides a more or less pluralistic model of democracy. Of that there is no doubt.

I would like to say a couple of sentences about human vocation. These sentences are about animals (but the animals in this case are human beings). The first sentence belongs to Aristotle. It is a very famous one, that the "*human being is a political animal*". The second sentence belongs to St. Basil the Great. He describes the human being as "*an animal who has received direction to become a God*". Putting the two ideas together we can view the human being as a political animal who has to be transfigured and afterwards has to transfigure the whole world, being transparent for divine energy to enter him and work through him.

Anyway, we have another sentence regarding "animals" from George Orwell, also a famous one: "*all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others*". And that's a complicated problem for churches and religious communities today, including the Orthodox Church family. The great challenge is to find the new way to live out their transfiguring vocation in the context of the new social environment. As you know, the Orthodox Church has historically existed for many centuries in two more or less deviant conditions. This being either the dominant majority or the discriminated minority. I cannot say that either of these positions is good. But we should learn how to reach a new position, trying to be active, dynamic, non-discriminative, and non-discriminated.

Looking anywhere in Europe today we can make some references to cultural heritage in terms of religious affiliation. But from a practical point of view what is the real percentage of people who take communion regularly on a Sunday, so-called “practising Christians”? Not more than 10, even less and that’s the real percentage of believers. If you talk about cultural and civilizational Christian identity we can say about 70 or 80 percent of the population in Serbia, Greece, Russia, Spain, Poland for example. But does it make sense if this affiliation doesn’t become an ultimate value?

Regarding inter-religious dialogue, my friend Richard Fischer mentioned a very important thing. Before we promote inter-religious dialogue we have to discuss the possibility of the intra-religious dialogue first. Sorry, at all conferences we have so many open-minded bishops, Muslim leaders, rabbis. We can easily communicate to each other and maybe we can even establish some kind of network. But to tell the truth (it is not a secret, anyway), at times it is even more difficult for us to communicate with representatives of the conservative circles in our own religious communities than with other religious leaders. And that’s the point - without real discussion inside our own religious communities, our inter-religious discussion will be very polite, very nice but fruitless. So intra-religious dialogue is important because of radicalization and we know this very well.

Next one... Alliance... You know maybe that couple of years year ago one of Russian Bishops in Europe proclaimed that traditional Alliance of Orthodox Church and Roman Catholic Church. It was Bishop Hilarion (Alfeyev) of Vienna. Maybe if we can put it in a wider context we should talk about *alliance of the Tradition* with a big T. What does it mean? Anyway we all Catholics, Muslims, Orthodox, Jewish are people of Tradition: we recognize that transcendence is important, symbolism is important and that moral values are not relative and not the subject of social contract. Secular humanists are also believers, they are not scientists, secular humanism is a religion itself, no doubt, even recognized as a religion in some countries like Belgium. So, in Belgium, we have Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants, Jews, Muslims and secular humanists recognized at the same level. This means that if somebody is going to die he can invite a priest or secular humanist counselor to help him in his last minute (maybe to be informed that there is nothing beyond). OK, maybe it suits somebody.

Anyway, those alienated from tradition should form the one side of the table. What then is on the opposite side of the table? I think that we all know the interesting idea of Jean Monet, one of the greatest architects of United Europe, regarding the negotiation process: we should sit at one side of the table and we should put the problem at the opposite side of the table. That’s the only way to negotiate, to solve the problem, to reach an agreement.

We should all sit on one side of the table and look at the opposite side. What can we see there? What is the main problem? We talk maybe too much about the social dimension of churches and religious activity but look at the young generation. What are they waiting for from our side? Of course, they don’t want us to be some kind of extension of the social services. Here in Europe, social services are more or less well organized because of welfare states, the social market economy etc. It is not necessary for churches to be recognized as an extension of social service and humanitarian aid, because if we look at the youngest generation, we see what we really have to do. First of all Churches should provide *the guidelines for transcendence*. It was mentioned by Mr. Jean Francois Collange that God is behind our identity. He is something more and of course religious identity is a source of our national, cultural identities, but God Himself is a source of our transcendence, not identity. Any religious leader should identify himself as a

Pontifex, - bridge-builder - to transcendence, which is the main vocation of any religious community. Second, we should be ready to provide a *non-consumerist vision of society*. That's also important otherwise we will lose the younger generation. They will go somewhere else... to find the answers for ultimate questions.

Some reflections about fighting. Of course, we should fight. In recent years there were so many conferences with titles like: fighting against terrorism, fighting against extremism, fighting against religious radicalism. In that case let's fight against any ism. It would be the greatest spiritual Jihad of our postmodernist period - deconstruction of any -ism, and this anti-ideological approach will be supported by Youth. For example, why don't we want to fight against secular militarism, which has often provoked the radicalization of religious communities? When we are talking about anti-semitism and Islamophobia in Europe why are we not discussing Christianophobia in Europe which really exists? So any *-ism*, any ideological heritage we should leave in past. That's my point.

I would like to mention that it is rather important to discuss these issues before we produce any final statement. I would like to mention something in my secular capacity as a European representative of the Russkiy Mir foundation which is the leading Russian NGO operating in cultural issues, (created especially to promote Russian culture and language abroad, being quite similar to the Goethe institute, British Council or Alliance Française). Of course NGOs have an important contribution to make in any dimension of our European life. I do think that the Russkiy Mir foundation should cooperate with CIVIS, and we could do something together. During this year, we are about to create 30 or maybe 40 centers of Russian language and culture in different European universities, including Serbia (in Belgrade and in some other cities), Bosnia and Montenegro. So I do think that we should cooperate with Serbian foundations and CIVIS to promote our solidarity and to create new expert forums and think-tanks for non-governmental dialogue. And on behalf of the organizers of the European- Russian Forum (I'm the executive secretary of this initiative), I would like to invite Mr. Boris Vukobrat and his colleagues to participate in our upcoming European-Russian Forum which will be held in the Parliament on the 8th of December 2008.

Thank you.

REVEREND DR DON IVAN GRUBIŠIĆ



Don Dr Ivan Grubišić was born on 20th October 1936 in Dicmu. He graduated at Bishop Classic Secondary School in Split in 1956. He obtained his first diploma at Catholic Faculty of Theology in Zagreb in 1962 and in 1982 he graduated Sociology and Philosophy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zadar. He obtained his PhD at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb with the topic: “*Religious behavior in Dalmacia in the middle eighties and evaluation of this behavior*” in 1995. In Croatian public, Dr Grubišić is known as intelligent critic of political and social events.

Speech of Reverend Dr. Don Ivan Grubišić

In Search of New Paradigm

Introduction remarks

I greet you all, and I have to say that I am treated with the invitation to participate on this symposium in the Council of Europe, in Strasbourg. Although I feel awkward since here are representatives of different religious communities, and although I am a priest of the Roman Catholic Church, I want speak on behalf of the Church, but not as its representative. I will speak as a sociologist of religion, and I gave a title to my short presentation: *In search for new paradigm*.

What is a paradigm?

It is a sample, example and pattern, a way of thinking, of believing, of valuing behavior in a continuous and recognizable mode in compliance with civilization aspirations in a particular moment in time, in the spirit of time and social context. Although there have been many different styles of living, through history and even today. They fit into, more or less, in one of two historically conditional paradigms. Conditionally said, there are two basic paradigms and many variations of them. These are the *authoritarian paradigm* (the paradigm of particular authori-

ties) and the *democratic and plural paradigm* (or a paradigm of authority of the truth). They are diametrically opposite, often they coexist side by side but more often one excludes the other one.

The Authoritarian Paradigm

This paradigm is based on different authorities such as: profane-political, natural-religious, and tribal-patriarchal, but also hierarchical- ecclesial authorities. This paradigm has been maintained for centuries: from tribal and patriarchal community to, as we say, contemporary time.

It is first of all based on the belief that Gods, spirits of tribes or God do not leave their tribe, people without its representative among them. The chief of the tribal, witch-doctor, or emperor represents the presence of divinity, the tribal feels because of him that Gods are near, that they are with us. Referencing to this higher authority, this imaginative and transcendent, this paradigm succeeded to settle and it marked the history of mankind from religious and monarchical to totalitarian dictatorships of the 20th century.

In the Roman Empire, the emperor has prerogatives of divinity: Jupiter in the heavens and the emperor on the earth: *Dominus ac deus*. He is *legibus solutus*, released from subordination to law. He is above the Law, for him laws are irrelevant.

This paradigm, no matter on which level exists, is marked with 4M (These are monism, monologue, monopole, and monolith). One religion, one ideology, one regime and one people etc. Thus, it is a monistic paradigm or paradigm of uniform mindedness. It permeated patriarchal marriage, political monarchies, middle-aged or contemporary hierarchies or modern communistic systems. Sovereign Soviet was this paradigm in 1919 defined with 3 M (monologue, monopole, and monolith) as a model of the system of functioning of communist empires, in other words, the uniformed mindedness regimes of the 20th century.

Berdiaev, the great writer once said for this situation in the USSR: "*In Russia, nothing changed. Middle Age has returned with a different omen, but the paradigm remained the same*". In fact, communists used very manipulatively the authoritarian paradigm against which they have allegedly fought. That actually, the power belongs to the avant-guard of the working class and not to the people. But in the name of that class, unquestioned authorities of the leaders of the revolution, secretaries of the party or central committees established themselves.

Church communities, basically, are all defined and they are functioning on this paradigm, a naturally religious one which relies on the thought of truth of particular authorities.

Churches talk about democracy but not in their "garden". They plead for democratic processes, but not in the Church. We are, by God's will, organized in a different way, hierarchically - send word to us hierarchs of different provenience.

We see that patriarchal marriage in developed societies of today has a lot of problems, it is not functioning, it breaks. It is followed by separations, conflicts, tensions. The woman works and she is economically independent from her husband. We do not have any more monarchies except in respect to historical heritage. Many uniform minded empires and dictatorships are pulled down; there are only religious communities left which patronize us, but democracy and modern trends of individual freedoms, the right of different opinion, believes the paradigm of the authority of truth -they do not want to accept.

In the Balkans, the Middle Ages have returned in an interest to harness the “throne and altar” but not to develop civil society with the distinguishable characteristics of the new paradigm.

The Catholic Church, in fact one sector of the theologians on the Second Vatican Council expressed a will for certain modernization of organization and functioning of the Church. Records in the documents prove this, but in practice little has changed. These religious fathers - Council's fathers - wanted to open the Church to new structures, to the new model or paradigm of relations which will lead to the first church and example of the Jesus from Nazareth. This new paradigm has its characteristics different from natural-religious, patriarchal and monarchical paradigm, but they did not want to finger with the hierarchical system of the Church. They considered it as fingering the foundations that had been building for ages.

In political and civil life, in an open civil society, the paradigm of the authority of the truth, acquaintance, knowledge, respect of human dignity, individual freedoms and human dignity, not easily, breaks through.

Religious communities, regardless of which one, in the countries of Southeastern Europe, tried really hard to participate in the changes, and to win for them good starting positions in a dialogue with so called new political elites. Those “elites” needed support from church communities because the people stayed faithful to its religious leaders, regardless of half a century of communist propaganda.

Church communities didn't resist the temptation of triumphalism for returning to the public, for being accepted again from new political powerful persons. They continue to live on laurels; they accepted the personality of a questionable past. This link is still very strong and here I see one of the reasons of regress for the countries of Southeastern Europe in the integration processes with the European Union. As much as church hierarchies are closer to authorities as far they are from God's people.

The Paradigm of the Authority of the Truth - Democratic Paradigm

This paradigm is struggling to get through the processes of modernization and secularization of the society. Many are not able, cause of their limits, to read the signs of the times so they choose to escape from reality, which is from my point of view an escape from life. Far from life, we are far from reality - and as a believer, my opinion is that as much as we are far from reality, we are much further from God himself. This is a big problem. We can imagine that we are near and that God only through us sends his messages, not seeing that we hear only what we would like.

I will dare to say, although new countries which are defined as democratic, that democratic processes haven't yet started. All these countries are actually at the door of democracy! There is no development of democracy and democratic procedures and standards but the party-ocracy, political parties, instead of people through its directly elected representatives. Church communities accept in general positions of political parties, they make arrangements, and they do not even try to set a democratic procedure and changes in election legislature of certain countries.

New authorities play the card of support to church structures, and churches consider these authorities as legal and legitimate representatives of people, although these politicians are not directly elected by the people, but placed by political parties. Church leaders respect the legitimacy of party-ocracy because they all participate in constituency of assemblies or parliaments of certain countries.

The New paradigm, the paradigm of the authority of the truth should be characterized, at least, by four valuable positions, four crucial characteristics. This is, from my point of view, at the same time, the human authentic Christian paradigm. These are the points or fundamentals on which we should build modern society:

1. The respect of dignity, civil and individual rights of every human person, regardless of any prefix. As the Christian message started from man: *"Which came from the heavens because of people and because of our redemption"* in the same way the new paradigm starts and places a man in the first place, man above all.

There are no two people who believe in the same way in God. It is a mistake when we say that we believe in the same God; it is one but each person believes in its own way. And that is certainly the truth - everyone believes in its own way because every single man is a unique person. One anecdote, some of you may have it heard; when Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo comments conversation between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, one of these discussions is very indicative for what I speak about now. Don Quixote said to Sancho: *"Listen Sancho, I will tell you now one absolute truth"*. *"Tell me the knight"*, said Sancho. *"Sancho, there is no other me in the world, mind the way you treat me!"* Sancho says: *"That is right, there is only one knight!"*

Afterwards they proceeded when they came to the second lawn. Don Quixote carried on: *"Sancho, I will tell you one more an absolute truth"*, *"Tell me"* answered Sancho! It was strange to him that there were two absolute truths! Don Quixote said: *"Sancho, in the world there is no other you, when we comprehend this then we will find true basis for our friendship"*.

Sapienti sat, Old Latin used to say, for the wise man it is enough. And for the wise musician a mosquito is even music!

2. We should develop a culture of free, equal dialogue on all levels of organized communities of citizens. Monologue comes before death, said A. Camus. In Christianity, God in Jesus Christ spoke, not only did he talk. One writer will again say that Jesus is God who talks to people. This is a new culture that is hard to locate on different levels. I think that, it is modern to talk about dialogue but we do not try enough to approach it sincerely and opened. The dialogue is important in a marriage, in a family, in religious communities, and is especially important to have an open and sincere inter-religious and inter-confessional dialogue.
3. Third, the right of being different should be accepted on all levels as one of the basic natural and civil rights teachings. All people are equal for their dignity, but each one is special, and that particularity should be respected from marriage and family community to civil and religious community. God wants our particularity and difference. Not to admit diversity at all levels, from my point of view, is an illusion to believe in God who created that. Because, these differences are legitimate. We live in a plural society and we are as much a plural society as much as we accept these differences and count on them. Therefore, every labeling, and unrecognizing of these differences, regardless which level or base, is a sign of the immaturity of one nation. It is very important that a major nation in one country is to be the first one that will treat the minority nations with dignity and to give them all human and civil rights.
4. The communion and solidarity among people, despite our particularities, is what characterizes the new paradigm in a modern world. We do not have another world but this today, plural on each level. Church communities, as political servants, should accept this paradigm if they want to help in building open, free, and tolerant civil society.

This consciousness, which derives from what is happening in front of our eyes, must become our vision and program of our engagement. Christianity would say that we need new evangelization, a new paradigm - civilization of love, as often has been pointed out by the Catholic theologian, Tomislav Šagi Bunić.

Closing remarks

Faith is authentic only if we live according to it. It refers, especially to Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Christianity is authentic only if it is lived as a way of life in compliance with civilization, scientific, and cultural achievements. Faith consists only of rituals, tradition, symbols, and an even sacrament is negation of the faith. Because, Jesus from Nazareth would say: *"I gave you an example to live"*.

Our societies are in a double clash. On one side, we are in a clash with standards of constitutional norms which are valid only for external purposes but we do not have a legal and social or fair state. On the other side, we are in a clash with basic documents of religious communities, such as the Bible and the Koran.

Now, if you accept these four valuable characteristics of a new paradigm, from my point of view, then we support the building up of democratic processes, a humane society, and we support spirituality. There are people that are not religious, but they are spiritual and they live with defined values. Unfortunately, there are religious ones but they are not spiritual! They practice their religion through rituals, vows, sometimes long prayers and fasts, but you cannot recognize them by solidarity, respect of other etc.

Here, I have noticed the efforts of some representatives who plead for the state to recognize and give certain privileges to churches as a precondition for successful work in these communities. I support freedom for religious communities to act but I'm against any privileges. I also support cooperation on social engagement, but religious communities should guard their autonomy like the apple of one's eye. In Croatia, we have experienced that of what no one gladly talks about, that religious teaching in schools didn't bring a moral nor spiritual Renaissance among youth. On the contrary, after receiving the sacrament and after finishing school, young people distance themselves from the Church.

One poll that was conducted recently among third grade students of high school surveyed around 12.000-15.000 youth, with the question *"What subject would you rather choose for a final exam out of 15 courses?"* Answers shown that over 3.000 students would choose psychology as the first subject. Another 1.600 respondents chose Physics; the third was sociology and then history as the fourth. The three subjects that they would be taken the least were Latin language, Religious teaching and Ethics. It should be mentioned that they all went to Religious teaching classes during their eight years of education, two hours per week and in high schools one hour per week.

So, youth consider that they need psychology to better know themselves. They need sociology to know a social context of living and they need history to know well what happened in past. What we offer as religious communities they do not ask for.

Religious communities are like a rearview mirror trying to stay faithful to tradition, ritual, cult, true authority, and less they are a reflector which puts light on the future, anticipating it from civilization's aspirations of today's time. Church communities and society in the countries of

Southeastern Europe are in a big clash. Religious communities are, in general, tied by roots for conservative and reaction forces of each society and progress. I am sad to admit that it is happening today. Churches are, one writer - annalist of social occurrences says, antidemocratically pointed and oriented. Churches do not fit democratic principles such as separation of Church from state, freedom of religion, or in other words freedom of consciousness.

Big challenges are in front of us, and I'm not convinced that we are ready to accept them and to give them an adequate response through the new paradigm of a common goal: humane, open, civil society and developed democracies. The basic illness of modern civilization is lost deeper in a sense of living and more and more irresponsible relations towards life. In these fields, church communities should be recognizable and give their contribution. They are for this mission invited and sent.

PROF. DR RADOVAN BIGOVIĆ



Dr. Radovan Bigović, professor of Orthodox Seminary faculty, University of Belgrade, and head of the monastery of Saint Archangel Gavriilo in Zemun, was born on January 17th 1956 in Niksic. He finished seminary in Krka Monastery. He graduated in 1980 from Seminary Faculty in Belgrade. Two years later he graduated from Philosophical faculty in Belgrade. He was assistant and docent on Seminary faculty in Belgrade, and in June he was elected as associated professor and then in 2000 he was named a Dean of the faculty. He defended his doctoral dissertation in 1992, and his mentor on the theme *“Basics of philosophical - seminary thoughts of Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović”* was Metropolitan Amfilophije

Speech of Prof. Dr Radovan Bigović

Your Eminences, Honorable Fathers, ladies and gentleman, I also share joy and pleasure for being here today, participating at this important meeting and I acknowledge from all my heart the organizers, the Association of Nongovernmental Organizations in Southeast Europe - CIVIS, Mr. Vukobrat' Peace and Crises Management Foundation and Konrad Adenauer Foundation for giving me the honor to participate in this Round table. Certainly, I am happy to be in this wonderful city, Strasbourg, city of roads, in the city where all roads flow to the Cathedral, and I'm remembering the words of Patriarch Ecumenical Bartolomeu when he was talking about the European Parliament, actually, he said that his wish was to see Europe as a Cathedral - deeply rooted in history but in the same time turned towards sky. I believe that all religious people, actually wish and dream of that Europe.

I do not have anything special new to tell you, that you already don't know. The goal of this event is more than noble, among other things, new dialogue between churches and religious communities on one side and civil society on the other side starts with it. For the region that we come from, it is very important, and thus this dialogue did not exist practically. Civil society

treats churches and religious communities as something retrograde, conservative obscurantism, as a remnant. Churches and religious communities are often an obstacle for democratization of society, and many other things... of course we should not make generalizations, because there are other tones. On the other hand, sadly, state institutions and people from church sometimes look at civil society, and precisely at nongovernmental organizations as foreign mercenaries and betrayers. In other words, I'm saying that there is mistrust when there for all this time exists a need for true, effective and constructive dialogue. And so much, it makes organizers proud for organizing this kind of gathering.

The other issue I'm thinking about now is how churches and religious communities could contribute to reconciliation or to long-lasting peace in this area. We had a chance to hear various opinions which I share but if we understand the reality in which we live, I'm afraid that under these circumstances churches and religious communities cannot significantly influence historical flows. Why? Because of one simple reason: that in contemporary Europe - and that means in the territory of Balkans as well - for a long time churches and religious communities have not had an essential influence and they do not standardize public and social life. Public and social life in contemporary Europe is standardized by state, then market, media and civil society. They coexist on one metaphysic paradigm which is actually opposite to Christian and religious positions. The fact is that modern Europe aspires to emancipate modern life from the influence of churches and religious communities and to base it on totally different positions.

So, if we truly want and expect from churches and religious communities to take part in the transformation of European societies, nevertheless in Balkan societies, then we have to provide certain preconditions. One of the preconditions is to reaccept faith or religion in Europe as a constructive factor of society. We know that nowadays people look at faith as a private feeling and as a private thing. Could we imagine what Europe would look like today if the most important subjects that society looks at - for instance, art, culture, science and philosophy- as something private... as if that they do not have public and social importance? What would Europe look like? It would be for certain a Europe of failed and incomplete persons. As long as we do not accept religion as something that builds a society, it is hard to expect from churches and religious communities to contribute significantly. Acceptance of this position is followed by the fact that we should also accept churches and religious communities as subjects that shape public and social life, equally with other subjects that I have mentioned.

We all know as believers that churches and religious communities could give the best contribution to general rebirth, transformation and reconciliation, if they form true Christian, and religious people. Only this kind of man really gives a contribution to reconciliation, he reconciles people and gives its metamorphosis. But beside this, it is very important for the future to insist on having a balance, in the first place, between science and religion. You are aware of the war between religion and science in Europe, between intellect and heart, faith and knowledge and how many unpredictable consequences it caused and still causes. We all know that knowledge without faith is sometimes cruel and brutal, to be fair, sometimes faith without knowledge could also be like magic and blindness.

Then, there is a dialogue between a Christian and secular Europe, in other words, a dialogue between a Christian and religious Europe on one hand and a Christian but secular Europe on the other. This is an important and new dialogue that we did not have until now, between two opposite Europes.

Regarding countries in the former Yugoslavia or Southwestern Balkans, there is the question: How to maintain long lasting peace, trust, reconciliation and cooperation? Of course, I do not of know such a recipe. Almost the entire world and Europe are focused on this problem and there is no satisfactory resolution... but let me say my opinion out loud.

It seems to me that one of the best preconditions to maintain sustainable peace building in the Balkans is that Europe accepts all these countries as soon as possible into the European Union. I know that there are always certain conditions, legal, institutional etc., which many countries could not achieve, but I'm deeply aware that there are reasons directly for Western Europe countries, moral and historical to accept these nations and countries and to build with them as soon as possible a joint Europe. The moral reasons are, first of all, that Balkan peoples often suffered because of these nations. The second reason is that we should not forget that the Balkan region is certainly a crib of European culture and civilization. Many civilizations and cultural goods have been moved through the Byzantine Empire towards Western Europe. I'm coming from a country that was, for half a century, divided between two empires: Ottoman and Habsburg. This is also the country that has, during the Second World War and during 20th century, survived one of the most terrible sufferings, from fascism to communism. And, at the end of the 20th century it was the only European country that was bombed for 78 days. I do not want to say that there is no guilt at all on the part of this nation or its political elites but I'm deeply convinced that the punishment was disproportionate to the culpability, and this is understood among people as revenge instead of justified punishment. Revenge is always a new crime.

In the case of integration of these countries into the EU, and here I mean politically, these peoples feel themselves as Europeans in a cultural and in every other way, than I believe, that many problems they are fighting about would disappear or became totally invisible. There is now a long lasting peace, it is clear to all, however if forgiveness and reconciliation become social categories instead of just religious dimension then they will have, from my point of view, important social function. In this regard, my opinion is that nongovernmental organizations and the civil sector should speak from an anthropological, sociological, and psychological perspective and not only from a religious one about how important is true reconciliation and forgiveness among people and among nations and among states because without them they cannot move forward.

Thank you for your attention and patience.

MARKO ORŠOLIĆ



Born in 1943, Tolisa, Orašje, BiH.

Master of Theology in Ljubljana (fundamental - negotiations group) and Master of Philosophy at the University of Zagreb. He graduated with degrees in Theology (Konigstein/Frankfurt), Political Science and History from the University of Sarajevo. Before the war he was a Ph.D. of Political Science and Theology.

He published books like: *“Christian in the Service of Revolution”*, *“In Spite of Evil Spirits, on the Opposite of Evil Spirits”*, *“Road Signs and Hopes”*, and over 200 articles in Serbian and foreign languages. He was a long-standing editor of the philosophical-theological magazine *Nova et Vetera* (1974-1991), but in public he is more famous for his frequent speeches and lectures in the media.

He is the winner of the “6 April” prize in 1991 that Sarajevo gives for *“long-standing active work in cultural and public life of the city”*. Together with Ljuba Jandrić, he was a creator of the concept, and co-organizer of the exhibition called *“The Treasure of Franjevc Monastery in BiH”* (Sarajevo 1988. Zagreb 1989. Ljubljana and Milano 1990).

He was the winner of the German Catholic award, Abt Emanuel in 1996, for his brave contribution to communication and peace between Catholic and Orthodox Christians in ex Yugoslavia. He was a member of the OHR Committee for state symbols in BiH, the OSCE temporary election committee (deputy) and also an organizer, moderator and judge of many stands and round tables in countries abroad.

He is the founder and general manager of the International Multi Religious and Intercultural center - IMIC - ZAJEDNO (TOGETHER) from 1991 and he is a member of presidency of SUBNOR in BiH.

He is a member of the Association of Independent Intellectuals KRUG 99 (CIRCLE 99) from its founding. He lives and works in Sarajevo and Munich.

Speech of Mr Marko Oršolić

Thank You, Professor Tanaskovic. I have yet to hear someone say the name of our Center properly, so I won't mind I haven't heard it here either. So, we are The International Multireligious and Intercultural Center, abbreviated IMIC. It's a complicated name, and I will try to explain why.

I already said during the discussion that we've heard a lot of nice stories, brilliant ideas, wise and clever suggestions, but what of the concrete? On December 10th 1991, the UN Human Rights Day, we created, in Sarajevo's Jewish municipality, The International Multireligious and Intercultural Center, TOGETHER, with a single, unique mission, not to allow anyone to divide people by their faith. The chairman of the Constituent assembly was Muhamed Kresevljakovic, the Mayor of Sarajevo, and a religious Muslim. Also taking part were Rabbi Jacik Danon from Belgrade, an Orthodox bishop, dignitaries of the Muslim community, and, of course, friar Petar Andjelovic, Provincial of Bosnia, as a representative from the Commission for Justice and Peace of the Conference of Franciscan Provincials of Central Europe (MEFRA), as well as representatives of five other international organizations (*Pax Christi* etc.). I'm saying this on purpose, to point out how we acted. Today, we have 2000 members, 90% of whom are people in mixed marriages, or descended from religiously or nationally mixed marriages. In our Directorate, there is a Serbian Orthodox priest, a Jew, a Muslim theologian and a Catholic theologian. It's not anyone's scheme, it's the way we work.

After many complications, turbulences and such, our experience is as follows. We would have done nothing without the help of the City of Sarajevo which gave us premises which belong neither to the state nor to any church, but are municipal and were given to us free of charge. We would have done nothing without the support for the projects by the ones I mentioned, but which projects are those? After many different projects, mainly with the Academy of Arts and Sciences of Bosnia and Herzegovina and with Sarajevo University, and many NGOs, pardon me, I forgot to mention that we were the second NGO to register in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first was the International Center for Peace, and we were the second. Now, to cut a long story short, what needs to be done, and what we are doing, and what we've intensely wanted, since 2000, under the auspices of the City of Sarajevo, we have the so-called "*Monotheistic Triangles*". Those are meditations, poems, prayers made on the occasion of Nationhood Day, or on the occasion of some other religious or secular holiday. It's similar to what Germans have on October 2nd, the Unification Day, a common prayer, held in turns in a Protestant and a Catholic church. I had the opportunity to say to the Speaker of the German Parliament that it is time to extend Christian prayers to a monotheistic dialogue, to include a Jewish and a Muslim prayer, too. He said that this is not his concern, that religious dignitaries should be convinced, and so on and so forth. I just mentioned this by, but it is really important to understand that these three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity in its different varieties, and Islam, are, in fact, so close, that, as Cardinal Koenig said in a speech given in Vienna in 1993, there is no parallel to such closeness in the history of religion. And I will not repeat what many speakers in the world elaborated, that these religions have so much peace-keeping and peace-building potential, that it is a scandal and a pity for these potentials not to be used to soothe and even terminate hostilities and wars in which these religious communities, churches and faiths themselves have been shamelessly involved for centuries. So, there is a lot that can potentially be done, only if there was an outcry clear enough, as the one on September 23rd 1992, when Cardinal Kuharic, and, the still living Patriarch Pavle and Reis-ul-ulem Selimovski called to end the war, called to peace

and reconciliation. The politics of the day boycotted such Declaration. Since then, and up to this day, I haven't heard anything similar from the heads of different faiths, nor seen in Southeast Europe. There were some actions, but I haven't seen a declaration. And the Declaration that was made, had been shamelessly ignored by the people in power, it was muted, and didn't receive the attention it should have. I think it's time that we introduce this monotheistic dialogue especially to Bosnia and Herzegovina, and absolutely to the region of Southeast Europe.

MR DRAGO PILSEL



Drago Pilsel was born in 1962, in Buenos Aires, The Republic of Argentina in a family of Croatian emigrants. He started being as a journalist in 1979, when he was 17. He has been a permanent associate, reporter, commentator, and columnist for “*Novi List*”, since March 1995. He writes comments for the “*Glas Istre*”, for the Serbian monthly from Zagreb “*Identitet*”, for the Jewish official organ “*Ruah Hadaša*” and for the Newspaper from Maribor “*Večer*”. He was a correspondent for and was reporter of various international media. He has rich journalist career in writing and electronically media. He has studied School of Mechanical Engineering, Literature, Latin American Political Thought, and Journalism (in Argentina and Brazil) and Philosophy and Theology in Argentina and in Croatia. He has graduated at Evangelistic Faculty of Theology in Osijek with the title: “*The Survey of Theology of 20th Century and Contribution of European Protestant Theology to Political Theology of 20th Century*”. At the same Faculty, he obtained his master degree in the fields of Moral Theology and Political Theology with the topic “*Theology of National Anti-Myth*”. He continued on working on the PhD thesis at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Zagreb. He speaks Croatian, Spanish, English, Italian, and Portuguese language.

During two mandates he was a member of Executive Board and once Vice-President of the Croatian Journalist Society, where he was from November 2000 till February 2003. President of the Journalist of Electronic Media Assembly - Forum 21. Three times he was the Vice President of the Free Journalists HND Branch. At the moment, he is a member of the Society for Protection of Journalists Authors Rights. He is a member of: Croatian P.E.N. Centre, Working group for the examination of conflicts in Southeast Europe (PfP Consortium) of the Austrian Ministry of Defense, Israeli - Croatian Society, Centre for Peace Studies, European Movement Croatia, Council of the Federation of Anti Fascists RC and SDP where he is also active as a member of the Council for Human Rights, and he was also Vice-President of HHO.

He is particularly interested in diplomacy, international politics, peace making process in the territory of Former Yugoslavia, human rights, Euro-Atlantic integration process of Croatia and neighboring countries, journalist's ethics, ethics in politics, theology and religious phenome-

non (political, sociological, and cultural) in other words possibility of contribution of Religion to peace-making process and reconstruction of common life, civil society building, political culture, development of public relations and education of young journalists for professional journalism.

Speech of Mr. Drago Pilsel

Religious and ethnic nationalism as the biggest obstacle in peacemaking- What is left to the children of the God without the platform of power?

I am speaking today in front of you as a Christian, as a peacemaker and peace loving man, as the one being created by God, who has recognized the celebration of an omnipresent brotherhood of all living creatures as the main task of humanity. By following these words, I believe that our main task is to talk about a paradigm that should be heard in our homes, about the fact that we are all invited to live not just one beside the other but one for each other. Regarding this it will be of no harm to mention theology, as one that can contribute. Theology as a way of critical opinion, which we can confirm from the practise and as educated people, is taking the role of liberation for the whole of mankind and society, releasing them from any kind of fetishism and idolatry. At the same time it liberates from dangerous and impoverished narcissism.

Any kind of theology, especially the political one, being understood in this way, has a constant and indispensable role in liberation from any kind of religious alienation, that is most often fed by the Church itself when trying to prevent an authentic approach to the words of God or to things we consider crucial in our own religious view.

We have rightfully pointed out for a long time that the only right way for any kind of assembly to start is from ascertainment of a constant "sacral madness" that is being created or that we are creating, or more exactly in our region (because the problem of religious fundamentalism, ethnic nationalism and general religious fetishism, has been spread, with small variations or exceptions, in almost every former Yugoslav republic, however not only in this area but also in other parts of world as well) that reconciliation is the final goal. And that is because reconciliation with God and among people must be a moral imperative, which is like a permanent obligation left by God himself, no matter what we call him. We must reconcile because we are divided among each other, and heavily confronted, among ourselves and in front of God, because of hatred there is nothing but the expression of xenophobia, and other forms of national or ethnic preclusions, and as a result of self-denying or forgetting the truth that we all, as humans, are called for unity in order to celebrate our differences not to create them.

Theology should, in my opinion, be developed and must correspond to seven crucial things that concern our religious path: a) we have to be incarnated in our true reality, within the world of victims and fight against tendency, very much present in our Churches and Religious Denominations, to give up our history, to run away in a more or less subtle way; b) we must keep faith in the future no matter how our religious way seems to become; c) we must act righteously not only to speak in the name of justice; d) we must call for justice for oppressors and to break up the groups of slaveholders and the structures of sin; e) we must give ourselves to the spirit of God and the spirit of peace; f) we have to bless meek of our spirit, poverty and brotherhood of everything created and g) we have to endure in our way no matter what kind of obstacles may be present.

After all, I truly believe that as we all want for ourselves to live a heroic life, we are able to recognize the call of the prophet. We, as prophets are called to interfere into political life, not to obstruct the processes of integration, normalisation and modernisation but to establish the structures more that just relying on existing ones. With no doubt, fight for human rights or more exactly the prophet's call for peace and justice, loyalty and solidarity, especially towards poverty are nowadays issues of most importance. I believe that from common culture, we are familiar with the chapter of book of Amos, the prophet, that is one of the clearest explanations of The Old Testament that exposes all political crimes which are, at the same time, crimes against humanity. Aren't they all repeated during the XX century and in our time? Is it possible to express the divine anger towards criminal acts?

As a theologian and a journalist I am also convinced that this short presentation, and trust me I am presenting it in the modest way possible, puts in front of you, listeners, an uncomfortable task to answer the question: what is left to those without the platform of power upon which they lean when the strategy of finding the place for the enemy within ourselves betrays? What when the peace making that is offered to the children of God causes the new unbearable agony to the ones who don't need an explanation of theology, thus they live it and breath it, even though in the moments when it seems like they are about to explode due to human indifference for their sufferings and because of the lack of society's perspective in the world of power and violence?

We can even say that: religion in society and in the lives of each individual is taking a versatile role in fulfilling a number of functions. The most interesting and the most common are the ones that are connected with finding excuses for humans' interests and covering up the same, which is a synonym for ideology. On the other side, researches nowadays show that throughout history religion had, more than we can assume, so called the role of a mask, because by its own theological rhetoric it was able to cover up religious scenarios that were completely dedicated to the interests of this world. The cases of political abuse of religion, that is a phenomena still present nowadays, are most clearly seen in bloody situations of godless violence, conflagration, plundering, so called ethnic cleansing, burning of the places of worship, waving religious symbols above the heads of nationalism and with the xenophobia of manipulated, frightened and almost insane citizens.

Imposed religion has also proved that there is no such political interest that could not be covered by religious ideas and unfortunately, the great number of religious leaders and servants took part in the same. Religious fanaticism is fed with the fact that there are believers who are trying to justify their violent behaviour, revenge, and manipulation by using religious ideas.

Regretfully, we have also noticed that the focus has been changed even in theology and as well as in the understanding of personal attitudes towards the questions of nationality and the state. The Church should transcend the nation and every form of nationalism. If some Church wants to be identified with a nation or ethnic group, people that differ by nationality or ethnicity are being expelled from the circle, and that must be revealed.

Finally, the role of any religious denomination is to question its own nature, and to accept and recognize mistakes and sins committed in the name of that group throughout history and in present time. Therefore, the time has come when it is inevitable to accept the sins of our fathers and show regrets for our own mistakes and to stop flirting with Fascism that praises the faith for the sake of the nation while raising the nation to the level of God.

We have to honestly admit to what level a certain claim has been infiltrated into the rows of our

society, that man could not be moral if his moral values are not in accordance with the needs of a nation. Croatians, Serbs, Bosnians, Albanians and many other have done exactly that. They speak of religious, ethnic or national identity in completely the wrong way. The result is a collapse of communication within the civil society and the lack of effectiveness of non-governmental associations that widely opens the doors for fascist ideas, and if someone is not formed enough, the step to the closed circle of national hatred is very small.

“People, we are all far from perfection: the good are helpless, the powerful are without kindness, the wise are indifferent, while those who think without love are without wisdom. We are as we are, and I, as a man and as a journalist who is trying to spread the feeling of tolerance in the public life of Croatia, would like to know what we are supposed to do to make the ideas of the European Union live again. Jean Monet, one of them, said in 1952: *“We are not trying to unite countries, our main goal is to make people closer”*.

That is one of the greatest challenges nowadays, for all of us who are willing to become a part of European Union: to make people, who know and who will work for human society, much closer. In some way they are nothing but real heroes of civil society.

There is nothing that a man wants more than a heroic life. The question is then; Are there enough heroes among us, enough courageousness, enough sebedarije, and enough vision? Is there heroic humanism anywhere? One that is released from itself and aware of its self existence, that leads us towards the victims, towards the others in need, to harmonized, responsible and organized work, towards the truth that lives in the essence of life?

We all have a wide open possibility in front of us, to take over the chance for remodelling intellectual, social or religious conditions of some, perhaps ideal or better time and place where we would all like to exist as individuals or as a society in general.

Churches and Religious denominations, as institutions with a critical attitude towards society, must take on the roles of critic and liberation entity.

The great theologian Jurgen Moltmann asked himself: *Could anyone be seriously engaged in theology after all that happened in Auschwitz?* According to him it is possible, but only if theology renovates itself and critically and conscientiously develops its own political dimension. Theology has always been in a political dimension. Freedom is a sacrament of hope and must be used for the abolition of slavery. God has been introduced to us as the whole foundation and the master of the universe, more exactly as the transcendental foundation of all human kind's existence and finally as the God of Hope.

Our society is still searching for its new spiritual and ethical support, without which we are not able to form any true democratic or legal state or the common benefits. Citizens, the believers are confused. At this very moment it is more than necessary for us to change existing, practical and political ideas and the political culture of the wider national structures.

After entering into a third millennium, the question above all questions must be: *Do we as humans progress in a moral way or are we stepping backward?*

We often ask ourselves if is there some political ethic i.e. a political morality in the way it is often described in general, when it refers to professional morality, according to which we can create ethical codes for some professions As representatives of theological science. We should answer this question positively.

Because there is no future for the world without a worldwide ethic, there is no peace in the world without peace among religions and finally there is no peace between religions without dialogues. So our political theology should firstly become ecumenical. Our horizon should also be ecumenical. Only then, will we be able to develop the theology of peace without which we will all, as theologians, betray God and waste the time given. We will prove that we were not able to understand and to see the signs of the times, the time during which the call for reconciliation with God and people was heard loudly. Dear people, is there anything more important than searching for the fruits of justice. I think there isn't.

Thank you for your attention...

DR PETER KUZMIĆ



A native of Slovenia and a citizen of Croatia in former Yugoslavia, Dr. Kuzmic is the foremost evangelical scholar in Eastern Europe and is considered an authority on the subject of Christian response to Marxism and on Christian ministry in post-Communist contexts.

Fluent in several languages, Dr. Kuzmic completed all his studies summa cum laude. He is a graduate of a German Bible College; received his B.A. from Southern California College in Costa Mesa, CA; M.A. from Wheaton Graduate School, Chicago, IL; and M.Th. and D.Th from the University of Zagreb. In 1992 he was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by Asbury Theological Seminary.

A former pastor of two churches, he is a founder and currently the director of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek, Croatia, the only evangelical graduate theological institution in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. He is also co-founder and chairman of the Council of the Evangelical Christians of (former) Yugoslavia, and president of the Protestant Evangelical Council of Croatia.

Dr. Kuzmic is in great demand as a speaker. His global platform has included plenary addresses at Lausanne II in Manila (1989), Urbana (1990), the European Leadership Consultation (1992), as well as other international gatherings. He has ministered in more than 60 nations on every continent.

An award-winning writer, Dr. Kuzmic has authored various articles and books including a major study on the influence of Slavic Bible translations upon Slavic literature, language and culture.

Dr. Kuzmic and his wife, Vlasta, have three daughters: Tatiana, Kristina and Petra.

Secular and religious pluralism as prerequisite for democracy (Summary)

There is no text without a context.

In order to understand the subject of our topic (on the painstaking and several times decelerated way to the democracy) - the most relevant contextual frame is collapse of our one-party system, dramatic revocation of socialistic federation that was supported by above mentioned system and complete social discredit of Marxist secularism on which this system was based on. These radical social, sociological and secular changes have caused synchronized phenomena that are double explosion of the things being repressed i.e.: nationalism and religion. Taking into consideration the role of Roman Catholic Church during the history of Croatian people (and similar if not the same influence of Orthodox religion on the Serbian history) it is not strange that ideological vacuum, created by disappearance of authoritative communism, was rapidly filled by the new authoritarian ideology, with characteristic oneness typical for national religions.

In the time of real and alleged endanger for national and religious identity, the new infiltrated ideology becomes the crucial factor in ethnic-religious homogenization of the nation that has been rapidly intensified in the period of war between the neighbouring Balkan countries and vulnerable sinfulness. Instead of gradual developing of liberal democracy and social pluralism afterwards, regressive and repressive political climate was created with the final goal that was so called “neo-konstantinovski” engagement between dominant religious institutions and newly created state. Under miserable excuses for so called general prosperity of the nation and (un-critical) patriotism, but in a way inappropriate for democratic procedures and practice, rulers, from politics and Church (that is acronym for parallel secular and religious control)) made decisions by violating basic principles of democracy, causing the damage directly to plural democracy and in some aspects even enabling active or covered discrimination towards secular and religious minority, and to certain individuals and groups that have different opinion.

The lack of critical public and omnipresent “political Catholicism” (or “Political Orthodoxy religion” in Serbia) and further anti-intellectual attitude supported by patriotic and religious citizens manipulated by political and religious anti pluralists, the lack of dialogues and ecumenism and as well as responsible social confrontation between different ways of thinking and finally existence of prejudiced and not effective judiciary have led to the status quo that does not go in favour of further development of secular and religious pluralism that is the basic condition for mature democracy.



ANNEX

THE LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

REPRESENTATIVES OF ORTHODOX CHURCH

01. *His Eminence Jovan Vraniškoski*, Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skopje, Autonomous Archdiocese of Ohrid, SOC
02. *His Grace Grigorije Durić*, Bishop of Zahumlje and Herzegovina, SOC
03. *His Grace Dr Porfirije Perić*, Bishop of Jegar, SOC
04. *His Grace Joanikije Mićović*, Bishop of Budim and Nikšić, SOC
05. *Archmonk Sofronije Jovašević*, Diocese of Budim and Nikšić, SOC
06. *Decon Zoran Aleksić*, Diocese of Zahumlje and Herzegovina, SOC

REPRESENTATIVES OF ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

07. *H.E. Msgr. Stanislav Hočevan*, Archbishop of Belgrade and Metropolitan, RCC
08. *H.E. Msgr. George Frendo*, Auxiliary Bishop of Tirana-Durres, and General Vicar of Archdiocese Tirana-Durres, RCC
09. *The Very Rev. Dr Mato Zovkić*, Vicar General of the Sarajevo Archdiocese in Bosnia and Herzegovina
10. *The Very Rev. Dr Don Lush Gjergji*, Vicar of Prizren, RCC

PROMINENT THEORISTS OF RELIGION

11. *Prof. Dr Radovan Bigović*, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, Serbia
12. *Prof. Dr Darko Tanasković*, Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, Serbia
13. *Rev. Dr Don Ivan Grubišić*, Croatian Academic Organization, Croatia
14. *Mr. Marko Oršolić*, Director of International Multi-religious and Intercultural Centre, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
15. *Mr. Drago Pilsel*, Publicist and Theologian, Croatia
16. *Dr. Peter Kuzmič*, Rector of the Evangelistic Faculty in Osijek, Croatia

REPRESENTATIVE OF ISLAMIC COMMUNITY

17. *H.E. Adem ef. Zilkić*, Mufti of the Islamic Community of Serbia

GUESTS

18. *Mr. Ulrich Bunjes*, Administrator of the Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe
19. *Mrs. Annelise Oeschger*, President of the Conference of INGOs, Council of Europe
20. *H.E. Ms. Sladjana Prica*, Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe of the Republic of Serbia

21. *H. E. Mr. Guido Bellati Ceccoli*, Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe of San Marino
22. *H.E. Mr. Athanassios Dendoulis*, Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe of Greece
23. *H.E. Mr. Alexander Alekseev, Ambassador*, Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe of Russia
24. *H.E. Ms. Eleanor Fuller*, Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe of the United Kingdom
25. *H.E. Ms. Margarita Gega*, Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe of Albania
26. *H.E. Mr. Daniel Bučan*, Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe of Croatia
27. *H.E. Ms. Eleonora Petrova-Mitevaska*, Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe of the Republic of Macedonia
28. *Ms. Maja Križanović-Dimitrijević*, Deputy of the Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe of the Bosnia and Herzegovina
29. *Reverend Richard Fircher*, Executive Secretary of the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CEC)
30. *Mr. Anton Ilin*, Archpriest, European representative of the Russian Mir Foundation
31. *Mr. Marc DeVore*, University of Saint Galen, Switzerland
32. *Mr. Jacques Duchemin*, Peace and Crises Management Foundation
33. *Mrs. Claudia Nolte*, Head of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Serbia and in Montenegro
34. *Mr. Boris Vukobrat*, President and Founder of the Peace and Crises Management Foundation, Switzerland
35. *Mr. Zoran Pusić*, President of the Civic Committee for Human Rights, Croatia

ORGANIZERS

Ms. Mirjana Prljević, International Secretary General of Association of Non-Governmental Organizations in SEE-CIVIS

Ms. Bojana Popović, Deputy Secretary General of Association of Non-Governmental Organizations in SEE-CIVIS

AGENDA

Jun 19th 2008

Hotel Holiday Inn, Place de Bordeaux 20, 67 000 Strasbourg

20.00 - RECEPTION

Welcoming addresses:

- *Mr. Zoran Pusić*, President of the CIVIS association
- *Prof. Dr Jean-François Collange*, President of the Protestant Church of the Augsburg, Alsace and Lorraine (ECAAL) in France
- *Mr. Boris Vukobrat*, President of the Peace and Crises Management Foundation
- *Mrs. Claudia Nolte*, Head of the Konrad Adenauer offices in Serbia and in Montenegro

Jun 20th 2008.

Council of Europe, Room 6, Strasbourg

09.00 - 09.30 REGISTRATION OF PARTICIPANTS

09.30 - 12.30 I SESSION OF THE ROUND TABLE

Moderator: *Prof. Dr. Zoran Pusić*, President of the CIVIS association and President of the Civic Committee for Human Rights (Croatia)

- Opening speech by *Mr. Ulrich Bunjes*, Administrator of the Directorate General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport of the Council of Europe
- Opening speech by *Prof. Dr Jean-François Collange*, President of the Protestant Church of the Augsburg, Alsace and Lorraine (ECAAL) in France

10 MINUTES SPEECHES

- *“Archbishop of Ohrid - The Church which is in 21st century persecuted by the government of the Republic of Macedonia”*
His Eminence Jovan Vraniškoski, Archbishop of Ohrid and Metropolitan of Skopje, Autonomous Archdiocese of Ohrid, SOC
- *“Religious Communities as an important factor for preservation and facilitation of peace”*
His Grace Grigorije Durić, Bishop of Zahumlje and Herzegovina, SOC
- *“The Role of Churches and Religious Communities in Sustainable Peace Building in South-eastern Europe”*
His Grace Dr Porfirije Perić, Bishop of Jegar, SOC
- *“The responsibility of churches and religious communities for the construction of inter-religious harmony and peace in Montenegro”*
His Grace Joanikije Mićović, Bishop of Budim and Nikšić, SOC
- *“Churches and religious communities in building lasting peace in Southeastern Europe”*
H.E. Msgr. Stanislav Hočevár, Archbishop of Belgrade and Metropolitan, RCC

COFFEE BREAK

- *“Reciprocity in ecumenical and inter-religious relations in Southeastern Europe”*
The Very Rev. Dr Mato Zovkić, Vicar General of the Sarajevo Archdiocese in Bosnia and Herzegovina
- *“Religions and religious tolerance”*
H.E. Msgr. George Frendo, Auxiliary Bishop of Roman Catholic Church in Tirana-Durres, and Vicar General of Archdiocese Tirana-Durres
- *“The contribution of the churches and religious communities in anticipation from conflicts”*
H.E. Adem Zilkić, Mufti of the Islamic Community of Serbia

12.30 LUNCH (PORTUGUESE GALLERY, COUNCIL OF EUROPE)

14.30 - 17.00 II SESSION OF ROUND TABLE:

Moderator: *Prof. Dr Darko Tanasković*, philologist and theologian, Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, Serbia

SPEECHES OF THE GUESTS AND PROMINENT THEORISTS

- » *Reverend Richard Fircher*, Executive Secretary of the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CEC)
 - » *Mr. Anton Ilin, Archpriest*, European representative of the Russian Mir Foundation
 - » *Rev. Dr Don Ivan Grubišić*, Croatian Academic Organization, Croatia
 - » *Prof. Dr Radovan Bigović*, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, University of Belgrade, Serbia
 - » *Mr. Marko Oršolić*, Director of International Multi-religious and Intercultural Centre, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
 - » *Mr. Drago Pilsel*, Publicist and Theologian, Croatia
 - » *Dr. Peter Kuzmič*, Rector of the Evangelistic Faculty in Osijek, Croatia
-
- Dialog and discussion between representatives of the churches and religious communities and guests
 - Adoption of concluding remarks in formal written statement
 - The final document

LETTER FROM MR. TERRY DAVIS

Council of Europe
The Secretary General

Strasbourg, 6 May 2008

Dear Ms Prljević

Thank you for your letter of 17 April requesting my patronage for the Round Table for the representatives of religious communities from Western Balkan countries which will take place in Strasbourg on 20 June 2008.

This Round Table is in line with the Council of Europe's priorities, and I am therefore glad to grant my patronage to this event.

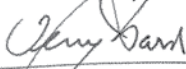
Please note that the patronage should be accompanied by the Council of Europe's logo and use the following sentence :

"Under the auspices of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Terry Davis"

You will find the Council of Europe's logo on our web site www.coe.int, under "Useful Selection". This logo cannot be modified and must keep the title "Council of Europe".

I should be grateful if you would inform our Director of Communication, Ms Seda Pumpyanskaya, about the publicity materials on which the patronage and logo will be mentioned and forward some examples of this material.

Yours sincerely



Right Hon Terry Davis

Ms Mirjana Prljevic
Secretary General International
CIVIS
Kralja Milana 31/II
11000 Belgrade
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LETTER FROM MRS. ANNELOSE OECHGER



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Mrs Mirjana Prijević
Secretary General International
Association of Non-Governmental
Organisations of Southeast Europe
CIVIS
Kralja Milana 31/II
11000 Belgrade
Serbia

Strasbourg, 16 April 2008

Dear Secretary General International

I hereby acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 15 April. I have taken note with great interest of your intention to organise a round table for the representatives of religious communities from Western Balkan countries in Strasbourg in June 2008.

Please note that I fully support this initiative.

Yours sincerely

Annelise Oeschger

Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe
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Secretariat
Tel : +33 (0) 388 41 31 07
Fax : +33 (0) 90 21 547 66

Secretariat : NGO-Unit@coe.int

**LETTER FROM
BISHOP OF ZAGREB, LJUBLJANA AND ITALY
JOVAN (PAVLOVIĆ)**

Православни Митрополит
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Pravoslavni Mitropolit
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M.Br.305/08

Zagreb, 12.06.2008.

**CIVIS
Association of Non-Governmental
Organizations of South East Europe**

**Boris Vukobrat
Honorary President
Kralja Milana 31 / II
11000 Beograd, Serbia**

Poštovani Gospodine Vukobrat,

Primio sam Vaše čenjeno pismo od 12.maja 2008. U vezi održavanja Konferencije u Strazburu, u zgradi Saveta Evrope, 20 juna 2008. na temu : Doprinosa crkava i verskih zajednica u izgradnji trajnog mira na jugoistoku Evrope. U prilogu pod. /, priložena je Lista učesnika i Program rada. Mnogo zahvaljujem na Vašoj odluci da i mene pozovete kao jednog od učesnika ove važne Konferencije, ali na žalost, zbog zdravstvenih poteškoća nisam u mogućnosti da uzmem učešća.

Ovom prilikom, dozvolite mi, dragi i mnogopoštovani Gospodine Vukobrat, da Vašom dobrotom pozdravim sve uvažene učesnike ove značajne Konferencije, koja se zalaže za trajni mir na jugoistoku Evrope. U Jevanđelju Hristovom stoji da će se mirotvorci nazvati sinovima Božjim – decom Božjom, što pozdravljamo i dajemo Našu podršku. Očuvanje sveta kao tvorevine Božje i ljudskih života prevashodna je naša obaveza i briga za životne uslove budućim generacijama.

Želeći mnogo uspeha u radu Konferencije sve Vas srdačno pozdravljam i želim izobilje blagoslova Božjeg.

+Mitropolit
Zagrebačko-Ljubljanski i cele Italije
/ Jovan Pavlović /

Jovan Pavlović



**LETTER FROM
BISHOP OF NOVI SAD, BAČKA, SOMBOR AND SEGEDIN
IRINEJ (BULOVIĆ)**



**ПРАВОСЛАВНИ ЕПИСКОП
ЕПАРХИЈЕ БАЧКЕ
Бр. 1979
13. јун 2008.
у Новом Саду**

**Асоцијација невладиних организација
Југоисточне Европе ЦИВИС
Госпођи Мирјани Прљевић,
Међународном генералном секретару
Београд**

Поштована госпођо Прљевић,

У вези са Вашим дописом од 12. маја 2008. године, којим Нас позивате да узмемо учешћа у раду међународног и међурелигијског скупа *Допринос Црква и верских заједница у изградњи трајног мира на Југоистоку Европе*, у Стразбуру, 20. јуна ове године, част Нам је обавестити Вас да због раније преузетих обавеза и службеног путовања у Грчку нисмо у могућности да се одазовемо Вашем љубазном позиву.

Ипак, схватајући значај Вашег позива, замолили смо Нашег викара, Његово Преосвештенство Епископа јегарског господина др Порфирија, да Нас замени у раду овог међународног и међурелигијског скупа, а Вас молимо да му доставите потребан материјал.

Од срца желимо да рад свих учесника округлог стола у Стразбуру буде плодотворан и да допринесе изградњи трајног мира не само у Европи него и у читавом свету.

Са благословом



Епископ бачки

LETTER FROM DON DR LUSH GJERJI

In order to understand Southeastern Europe and the Balkan area, we need a short analysis of historical events, because we are nothing than a simple product of such a history. Southeastern Europe was partly separated from Western Europe by force and under Turkish domination and occupation that lasted for centuries. That period of time resulted in a number of sufferings, troubles, slavery, discontentment and frustrations that led to aggressive behaviour through a subconscious process, mostly hidden, dangerous and uncontrolled.

The very first psychological consequence of that situation was frustration that always causes tension, disturbance, dissatisfaction, aggressive behaviour and culminates into negative directions that tend to lead towards the destruction of others. This situation brings people to dangerous conclusions and wrong determinations such as the position in which they are obliged to choose "it's either us or them", and to the number of heavy prejudices from the past that are infiltrated into the present time and will poison and compromise the future. This will finally leave the guilty ones without any blame.

The second psychological process is de-culturalisation, or a lack of culture, which happens when different nations, religions, cultures and mentalities are being confronted. They are changing by force the models of life and behaviour of the ones being conquered. This kind of conflict between the East and West, Islam and Christianity has actually generated this mixture that we are today.

Frustration and aggressiveness, de-culturalisation or, a lack of culture, provokes the third phenomena, the projection of guilt onto another person. In order to justify their own behaviour, people tend to blame and judge others. This kind of symbiosis of The East and West, Christianity and Islam, does not have a permanent and fixed line of differentiation, that is a long lasting process which spreads out with every new emigration with far-reaching consequences for nations, religions, cultures and civilisations.

Using a regression to the past we actually praise and glorify our own history, wars and people, which directly undervalue others. With a future projection, using the catchphrase - it will be better- we are creating a utopian or idyllic future without any foundations or working processes which is almost like self-delusion and complacency. Looking back into the past and projecting some future image actually shows our intention to escape from the difficult present time in which we can only live.

These kinds of processes have provoked a mass mentality, in which a certain individual loses his own identity, vanishes into anonymity and becomes just a number by accepting the principle: as everyone so am I. That drives to two extremes: outrageous individuality- only if I want/ say- which is a tendency for domination over others or complete differentiation- I don't care; wherever they will go I will go too- which is a tendency for servility and opportunism towards the powerful and domination towards the weak.

"Historical" dreams led the people to one more absurdity, which is the creation of so called nationalistic countries. Now at the end of XX century, the base of everything is NATION, with often exaggerates nationalism, not the man as individual and COUNTRY, that were the basic principles of Feudalism with permanent boundaries and strict control. The fact is that today this is impossible everywhere. Following this kind of logic - being different means being an en-

emy - not belonging to the same nation, country, religion, culture or political opinion...means risk. We are creating the danger that leads to rigidity even to extermination, but not to the harmony within the difference.

What Can and Must the Church, Religion and the Religious Denomination do in the present time?

Communism and atheism expressed a great fear of being religious, therefore religion was forbidden and privatized, excluded from society and mass media culture. Insipid internationalism, brotherhood and harmony, state, people and projections of an earthly paradise were created as some kind of replacement. That gave the religion limited influence on creating people's mentality, family, society; because without vertical, superior values, there is no horizontal, in this world's existence. Without GOD - LOVE and THE FATHER, people are nothing not even brothers and sisters but only subjects, things to be operated with and manipulated by ideology, politics and unfortunately more than by religion.

There are a number of possibilities for manipulation; however I will state only the crucial ones:

The Ecumenical Council between Christians that reaches the quality and intensity by triple through meetings which have cancelled out century old excommunication and damnation, all under the support of Pope Pavle VI (1897-1878) and Atenagora (1886-1972). It has opened the door to further meetings, dialogues and rapprochement between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches but even among all Christians. For war, hatred and rejections, we just need "madness" for being self confident, to live in peace, to forgive we need faith and courage, God and love with no boundaries. A love that even exceeds, "the madness of crisis"; a love and forgiveness even towards the enemy.

A Multiethnic Dialogue between Christians and Muslims, that is, especially in Kosovo, but even wider amongst the majority of Albanians, very constructive and positive. All Albanians are aware of their Christian past, national origin and joint brotherhood that is beyond any religious or other affiliation. Therefore we are showing respect to each other much easier as Albanians - which creates a national base- and as believers and monotheists- which creates a religious base. Just because these historical conditions and present times "*our Islam*", if I can use that expression, is with its largest part pro-Christianity and pro-European. It can not exclude itself or its origin for more than fifteen centuries, neither the important fact for all Albanians that no nation, no culture, no language will exist without Christianity and its cultural influence over nation that is no more Christian.

A Multiethnic Dialogue with the goal of dispelling different historical and current prejudices because in general all people are good hearted, but unfortunately, governments, a number of manipulations and dictatorship could lead to passionate hatred, wars and even to ethnic cleansing as if the others are not purified, as if they are unbearable and should be expelled from our environment, so that they could let us live a peaceful and a free life. That is a devil's invention or creativity with evil, where we are losing our minds, hearts, souls... everything... Universal values like life, work, family, safety, health, truth, justice, freedom, honesty... belongs to everyone. Therefore we should, as humans, believers and Christians stick together in the fight against hatred, which is the most powerful enemy and dictator of all time and will last forever... It is a great evil of the present time, which destroys and subconsciously annihilates everything in the world. The one who hates is the one who lives only to bring evil, which is not a dignified life

for mankind, family and people. The only war that could be “justified” is the war against hatred, separations and injustice. Hatred is killing us all and burying us alive. The greatest slavery nowadays is materialism, consummation, hedonism, religious indifference, destroying of conception, abortion or in the old age period - neglecting, not taking care of the elderly euthanasia. These are things we have to fight against and stick together in the fight.

Churches and other religious communities must excel in this high-quality process through catharsis and purification. They must ask for forgiveness and are obliged to forgive everyone, without any conditions, because that is the only way for true freedom, and the creation of a better present and a safer future.

The Catholic Church in Kosovo is giving all its best trying to create a bridge of rapprochement between Christians and Muslims, within the double brotherhood by faith with Christians Serbs and people from Montenegro and by nation with Muslim Albanians. This situation is the product of the past but also of the Transparency, the ability to measure ourselves by the fact that we are all people, ones who believe, and as Christians always be ready to testify the cause „because the Law is focused on one and one Rule only: *“Love your neighbour as much as you love yourself”* (Gal 5, 14).

The Very Rev. Dr Don Lush Gjergji, Vicar of Prizren



PHOTOGRAPHS



Koktel, 19. jun 2008. godine | Cocktail, June 19th 2008



Koktel, 19. jun 2008. godine | Cocktail, June 19th 2008



Koktel, 19. jun 2008. godine | Cocktail, June 19th 2008



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Setija I, 20. jun 2008. godine | Session I, June 20th 2008



Setija I, 20. jun 2008. godine | Session I, June 20th 2008



Setija I, 20. jun 2008. godine | Session I, June 20th 2008



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Sesija II, 20. jun 2008. godine | Session II, June 20th 2008



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Grupme fotografije | Group fotos



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